

**DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION, CHILD AND ADOLESCENT
PSYCHOLOGY**

**HOW TO RAISE 'HOPE' IN YOUNG PEOPLE FROM A
MODERATE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES SPECIAL SCHOOL?**

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DECLARATION

I, Mei Yan Cheong confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

Using Snyder's hope theory as the base, the present study aimed to conduct a qualitative-based exploratory case study to understand the relevance and operationalisation of a hope programme to young people from a moderate learning difficulties (MLD) special school. The person-centred approach was adopted in which the perspectives of four young people attending an MLD special school and their teachers and parents were obtained. This research has two phases. In Phase 1, the young people were invited to share their understandings of the terms used in Snyder's hope theory, i.e. hope, goal, pathway thinking (replaced by the term 'plan' in this research), and agency thinking (replaced by the term 'motivation'). They were also asked to share their views about the relevance and significance to them of an intervention programme, developed using Snyder's hope theory, as well as its applications. The young people's responses, along with Snyder's hope theory, were then presented to the teachers and parents, to obtain their perspectives.

The study findings demonstrated that most participants were positive about implementing a hope programme, based on Snyder's theory, in the school. However, concerns were also raised with regard to its accessibility for students of all levels. Implications of the study findings for young people from an MLD special school and the practices of educational psychologists (EPs) were reflected. This research reflected the significant role of EPs in working systemically with schools, parents and students, and having an influence at the school level. It also demonstrated the role of EPs in strengthening the equal opportunities given to young people from an MLD school, and shed light

on the appropriateness of a wellbeing programme that was informed by the local context as well as by group norms and values.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an introduction to the background and justification of conducting this research, as well as the participants selected.

1.1 BACKGROUND

'Hope' has been recognised as the essence of individual's mental health and wellbeing (Snyder & Lopes, 2009a). In my role as a trainee educational psychologist, my interest lies in exploring how hope can be applied to support the wellbeing of young people with learning difficulties, a population which past research has suggested experiences poorer mental health and perceived wellbeing, compared to their typically developing counterparts (e.g., Emerson, 2010), particularly those in a special school setting (Griffith, 2007).

Therapists often use hope as a vehicle to promote positive therapeutic outcomes, whether consciously or unconsciously, such as setting a therapeutic goal to encourage 'hopeful thinking' in clients and to promote a sense of positivity towards the future (Snyder & Lopez, 2009; Taylor, Feldman, Saunders, & Ilardi, 2000). However, there has been a discrepancy in the definitions of 'hope'. In the past, 'hope' was defined by either its emotional or cognitive aspect. For instance, Mowrer (1960) defines 'hope' as the anticipation of a pleasurable event, emphasising the emotional aspect of hope as expecting the occurrence of positive affect (pleasure). On the other hand, Erikson (1964) conceptualises 'hope' as a personal belief based on the

possibility of attaining a goal. This definition lays emphasis on the cognitive aspect of hope. However, neither of these definitions of 'hope' extensively captures both the emotional and cognitive aspects of hope.

Snyder (1994) presents 'hope' as a concept that encompasses both cognitive and emotional features. Snyder's hope theory consists of three main components: goal setting, pathway thinking and agency thinking. Snyder believes that hope sparks when one has confidence in one's personal ability to make plans and problem-solve (pathway thinking, cognitive aspect), and is driven by personal intense desire to achieve a goal, as in self-motivation (agency thinking, emotional aspect). Therefore, in order to 'build hope', it is important to support an individual's development of problem-solving, planning, and self-motivation skills. This conceptualisation of Hope has been recognised as a construct of positive psychology, which focuses on identifying and promoting the positive traits and strengths in people (i.e., hope) to support their mental health and wellbeing.

The principles of Snyder's hope theory are also in line with the definition of 'resilience' documented in early literature by Rutter (1985), which was later adapted by the Department for Education (DfE, 2016) in their recommendation of mental health support provided for children and young people:

Resilience seems to involve several related elements. Firstly, a sense of self-esteem and confidence; secondly a belief in one's own self-efficacy and ability to deal with change and adaptation (*agency*

thinking); and thirdly, a repertoire of social problem solving approaches (*pathway thinking*). (DfE, 2016, p. 8)

This suggests that Snyder's hope theory, though new, has precedents and the potential of enhancing an individual's confidence and capacity to deal with the negative and challenges in life. Due to the concreteness and comprehensiveness of Snyder's theory (1994), this definition of hope has piqued the interest of practitioners. It has also led Snyder's hope theory to become one of the most rigorously and extensively investigated 'hope', as well as positive psychology, constructs (Feldman & Dreher, 2011; Gallagher & Lopez, 2009).

Using Snyder's hope theory as the foundation, hope theorists have developed Hope programmes aiming to cultivate hope in schools, teaching students to set goals, make plans and self-motivate. Although this intervention approach is lacking empirical support to date due to its novelty, it is underpinned by a number of profound therapeutic approaches, including the cognitive-behavioural, solution-focused and narrative therapies. Past research has also demonstrated the significance of using a Hope programme to support the development of perceived life satisfaction and self-worth in young people (e.g., Marques, Lopez, & Pais-Ribeiro, 2011). This indicates the potential of Hope programmes in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, and suggests that increasing hope using Snyder's hope theory remains an area that merits exploration. Therefore, Snyder's hope theory was

selected as the basis for this research on strategies to raise hope in young people from a learning difficulties special school.

1.2 JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH DIRECTION

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (DfE, 2015, p.16) states that:

A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if s/he:

- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream Post-16 institutions.

The British Institute of Learning Disability (BILD, 2015) indicates that despite learning difficulties being classified into four categories in the UK, i.e. mild, moderate, severe, and profound and multiple learning difficulties, there is no clear division amongst the groups. Nevertheless, due to varying cognitive and linguistic needs, young people with mild learning difficulties are often placed in a mainstream school, whereas most of those diagnosed with moderate learning difficulties or more severe learning difficulties are likely to receive education in a special school setting. Past research has demonstrated that individuals with learning difficulties are at greater risk of exposure to life adversities and mental health issues (Emerson & Hatton, 2007; Emerson,

Shahtahmasebi, Lancaster, & Berridge, 2010), particularly those from a special school setting who tend to develop a more negative self-concept (Griffiths, 2007).

Educational psychologists (EP) are professionals who work closely with schools to promote equal opportunities and support the learning, mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. As a trainee EP, considering the greater risk of exposure to life challenges and mental health issues faced by young people placed in a special educational setting, I feel the responsibility of developing a wellbeing programme that could equip and empower this marginalised population with a sense of hope and positivity to conquer the adversities that life has to offer. This intention is particularly prominent and timely in light of the Department for Education (DfE) Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (2015) and mental health advices for schools (2016), which urges schools to work in partnerships with other professionals, using the person-centred approach by involving students and parents, to explore and formulate intervention strategies that are bespoke to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their children and young people.

In particular, the SEND code of practice (2015, p.21) and the DfE mental health advices for schools (2016) respectively state that local authorities must and schools should “ensure that children, young people and parents are provided with the information, advice and support necessary to enable them to participate in discussions and decisions about their support.” This advocacy

from the DfE places EPs, who use a systemic approach to support children and young people, in an ideal and significant position to support schools' exploration of intervention strategies that are tailored to their students.

Moreover, despite the vulnerability of individuals with learning difficulties, past research investigating strategies to support their mental health and wellbeing is scant, particularly for children and young people. A review conducted by James, James, Cowdrey, Solet and Chose (2015) surprisingly found that, although cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) has been suggested as one of the most prevalently used therapeutic approaches in the field of education (Atkinson, Squires, Bragg, Muscutt, & Wasilewski, 2014), there had been no study on CBT conducted specifically on children or adolescents with learning difficulties. This is an example of how, when it comes to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, those with learning difficulties are often neglected.

Consequently, in order to advocate for the equal opportunities given to this marginalised population, this research project aimed to collaborate with young people from a learning difficulties special school, and their teachers and parents, to understand the significance of developing a Hope programme for this population from their perspectives, and to explore the strategies and approaches that such a programme could employ.

According to the BILD (2015), individuals with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) often present with an IQ score of between 35 and 50. They are likely to

have sufficient language skills to communicate their daily needs. Many of them are able to develop self-care skills, though some may require additional support from others. This definition of MLD also adheres to the definition of MLD used in my local authority. Thus, considering the nature of this research, which may make demands on participants' verbal language skills, young people from an MLD special school were recruited. In order to obtain a more holistic perspective, the views of the teachers and parents were also sought. Specifically, the present study intends to conduct an exploratory case study to generate a better understanding of whether and how Snyder's hope theory might be relevant and applicable to an MLD school by shedding light on the following research questions:

- 1 What do these young people understand about the terms underpinning the principles of Snyder's hope theory, namely hope, goal, pathway thinking and agency thinking?
- 2 What is the relevance and significance of using a Hope programme with these young people, as perceived by the young people themselves, their teachers and their parents?
- 3 From the perspectives of these young people, their teachers and parents, how might a Hope programme best be operationalised in the special school setting?
- 4 What are the implications of this research, particularly for young people and schools with similar demographic backgrounds, as well as for the practice of educational psychologists?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will first present the literature search and analysis conducted to provide an overview of the methods used for literature review. This will be followed by discussion of the significance of raising hope in young people with learning difficulties. The review of Snyder's hope theory and Hope programme will then be presented, first by introducing its underpinning psychological framework—positive psychology—and its impact in the United Kingdom (UK), and subsequently by reviewing existing studies of using Hope programmes with children and young people. The significance of using the person-centred approach will be discussed, as well as the present study, in which the research purpose will be presented by drawing upon the literature reviewed in this chapter.

2.1 METHODS FOR THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing research literature was searched using search terms such as positive psychology, hope theory, hope intervention and learning difficulties, using databases including EBSCO, ProQuest, PsychInfo and PsychArticles, UCL library search and Google Scholar. Appendix A contains a complete list of the search terms used. The date range was adjusted to begin in 2010 in order to retrieve more recent literature and to allow for the identification of earlier key articles, whose references were hand-searched. Past research emphasising the significance and use of hope was prioritised, particularly

those studies underpinned by Snyder's hope theory. Literature relevant to children and young people with learning difficulties was also prioritised.

2.2 HOPE AND MODERATE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (MLD)

Much of the past research in the UK suggests that the mental health and wellbeing of individuals with learning difficulties are relatively poorer than those without such difficulties (Emerson & Einfeld, 2010; Emerson & Hatton, 2007). Attempts to explain this have related it to greater risk of exposure to life adversities, such as poverty (Emerson et al., 2010), bullying and discrimination of 'disablism' (Emerson, 2010), lower achievement (Lackaye & Margalit, 2006), and difficulty in processing and problem-solving issues (Hartas & Donahue, 1996).

Mental health difficulties were reported to be more severe in students from a special school setting, compared to their mainstream counterparts. For instance, when exploring the self-concept of 21 Key Stage 3 students with MLD from either a UK mainstream or special school setting, Griffiths (2007) found that those from the MLD special school presented a more negative self-concept than those from the mainstream school setting. Although the qualitative nature of Griffiths' study has restricted practitioners' understanding of the significance of the findings as well as its generalisation, this study highlighted the urgent need for mental health support for this population. Moreover, an earlier study by Norwich and Kelly (2004) found that students from an MLD special school had an even more negative life experience than

those from mainstream schools. When exploring the inclusion experience of 101 primary and secondary school students with MLD from either setting, Norwich and Kelly found that those from the special school setting reported a higher frequency of being bullied by neighbours and peers outside school. These findings that suggest the even greater risk of experiencing mental health issues (Griffiths, 2007) and adversities (Norwich & Kelly, 2004) in young people with learning difficulties highlight the significance of cultivating hope in them, to equip them with the confidence and capacity to conquer life adversities.

This suggestion is echoed by a number of studies which have shown the significance of having Hope, as defined by Snyder (1994), for the wellbeing of children and young people with learning difficulties. For instance, similar to students without learning difficulties, recent research in Israel reported Hope as the mediator and moderator, respectively, for both the protective and risk factors in young people with learning difficulties. It is also a determinant of their academic self-efficacy and achievement (Idan & Margalit, 2014).

Additionally, Shogren, Lopez, Wehmeyer, Little and Pressgrove (2006) found Hope to be a significant predictor of life satisfaction in young people with and without learning difficulties. Shogren (2013) noted that the approach of positive psychology underpinning Snyder's hope theory, which focuses on identifying and developing strengths, is fundamental to the development of a sense of self-worth and autonomy in individuals with learning difficulties, who are more susceptible to life adversities and 'disablism' (Emerson, 2010).

2.3 POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS IMPACT IN THE UK

The increased cases of mental illness after World War II resulted in the use of “a disease model of human functioning” (Shogren, 2013, p. 2). This approach narrowed the focus of psychology to curing and treating mental abnormalities, while disregarding the equally valuable strengths-based approach of psychology and the significance of helping people to construct a more rewarding and fruitful life (Shogren, 2013). The awareness of this inspired Seligman (1998, as cited in Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) to call for the reorientation of psychology to focus on understanding and building positive human traits and qualities, instead of simply emphasising the absence of mental impairment. Seligman named this approach ‘positive psychology’.

Positive psychology is the umbrella term for work that attempts to understand and explore the factors and processes that promote happiness and wellbeing in people. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) proposed that positive psychology consists of three pillars: (a) positive experiences and emotions, including positive affect and subjective wellbeing; (b) positive individual traits, referring to individuals’ character strengths; and (c) positive institutions, meaning the organisational systems, such as schools and family, that support the cultivation of the former two. Most positive psychologists would agree that positive psychology is not a brand new term or theory but rather an advanced study of humanistic psychology; positive psychology has systematically integrated the idea of human happiness and optimal functioning into more extensive research and practice (Shogren, 2013; Yen, 2010).

However, a number of issues with regard to the philosophy and theoretical underpinnings of positive psychology have been raised since its emergence. The extreme focus of positive psychology on 'happiology' has been one of the most common criticisms received. Past research criticised positive psychology for its marginalisation of the impact of adversity on an individual's life, whilst promoting a 'hedonic happiness' from which only those coping well with life could benefit (McNulty & Fincham, 2012; Miller, 2008). Nevertheless, this perspective on positive psychology has been criticised as lacking a holistic understanding of the true nature of positive psychology (Diener, 2012; Norrish & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). As Diener (2012, p.10) elaborated:

Positive psychologists do not ignore the negative in life. However, they maintain that often one form of solution to problems, and in some cases the most effective one, is to build on the positive rather than directly work on the problem.

This argument from Diener was validated by neuropsychological research which signified that positive emotions enhance the activity of the anterior cingulate cortex, a brain region regulating cognitive flexibility, and in turn increase an individual's problem-solving skills (Lin, Tsai, Lin, & Chen, 2014; Subramaniam, Kounios, Parrish, & Jung-Beeman, 2008). These studies demonstrate the pragmatism of viewing individuals' problems and difficulties through the lens of positive psychology.

Although the principles of positive psychology were conceived in the United States of America (USA) and might not receive as much attention in the UK

as they generally have in the USA, a number of researchers have recognised its impact in UK educational contexts (Kristjánsson, 2013; Suissa, 2008). In light of its approach, positive psychologists advocated for the implementation of 'positive education', which aims to introduce and infuse 'happiness lessons' into schools by cultivating and focusing on students' positive traits (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). This notion supports the use of a strengths-based approach in the UK educational context, such as the introduction of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme into school curriculum; one of the most prominent nationwide educational approaches.

Although not widely recognised, the foundational concepts of the SEAL¹ programme resemble the principles of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), in that it encourages schools to acknowledge and cultivate positive attributes and skills such as empathy in children and young people. However, the effectiveness of the SEAL programme was found inconsistent. In particular, when Wigelsworth, Humphrey, and Lendrum (2012) compared the participating schools with the control schools on a number of measurements, including the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Emotional Literacy Assessment and Intervention, they found no significant difference in the development of students' social emotional skills and mental health. Wigelsworth et al. (2012) concluded that the negative findings were likely to be a result of the SEAL programme being perceived as

¹ Given that the SEAL programme is not the primary focus of the present study, its methodology will not be presented in detail. For more information, please see Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2005) as well as the evaluation of the SEAL programme for primary schools (Hallam, 2009) and for secondary schools (Humphrey, Lendrum, & Wigelsworth, 2010).

a 'prescription', instead of a flexible model to be tailored to the schools' cultural backgrounds and values. Thus, Wigelsworth et al. reminded practitioners of the significance of implementing an evidence-based wellbeing programme that is informed by local contexts, not only national initiatives and past research. As White (2016) highlighted, considering and integrating group values and norms into a wellbeing programme is crucial to its effectiveness.

One pioneer of infusing the concept of positive psychology into the UK educational context is Wellington College. Wellington College has been delivering 'happiness lessons' since 2006. Similar to any school philosophy that is novel to the majority, the promotion of 'happiness lessons' from Wellington College has received criticism from various educational philosophers and professionals. For instance, Suissa (2008) stated that 'happiness lessons' have laid too much emphasis on the empirical verifications and definitions of what 'happiness' is and should comprise of, which could result in the marginalisation of the diverse individual perceptions of happiness. However, Morris (2013), one of the founders of Wellington College's 'happiness lessons', responded to the criticism by accentuating the self-evaluation process included in their lessons. In this process, the students reflected on the skills, such as stress management, they have learnt to increase 'happiness' by indicating the impact it has on their wellbeing and recommending other possible topics or skills they might require or be of interest. Morris (2013, p. 10) highlighted the significance of this self-evaluation process in promoting the students' subjective wellbeing and, in agreement with Suissa (2008), emphasised that "'happiness' is ultimately subjective".

Due to his belief that there is no definite measure for 'happiness', Morris (2013) refused to conduct any statistical analysis on the impact of the 'happiness lessons', which resulted in a lack of documented statistical data validating its significance. However, reports from the school showed that, since the introduction of 'happiness lessons', A-level grades of their students have improved from 69% of A/B grades in 2005 to 93% of A*/A/B grades in 2012. Feedback from the teachers also indicated that the students were better able to engage in general academic curriculum and other school activities (Morris, 2013). This 'happiness lesson' has been recognised as a success by most positive psychologists for its demonstration of the use of positive psychological concepts to support students' wellbeing in the UK (Boniwell & Ayers, 2013; Proctor, 2014).

2.4 SNYDER'S HOPE THEORY

2.4.1 Introduction

Snyder's hope theory (1994) is based on a strengths-based cognitive emotive approach that falls under the umbrella of positive psychology. It consists of three major components: goal setting, pathway thinking and agency thinking.

Goal Setting

In Snyder's hope theory, helping an individual to set a goal is essential to enhancing his/her levels of Hope (Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, & Feldman, 2003). A positive goal can be anything that drives an individual to achieve instead of avoid. It is the endpoint of a sequence of mental actions that

anchors purposeful behaviours, which equips an individual with the ability to envision a positive future and to gradually achieve and realise it. This sequence of action determines an individual's subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction (Marques, Lopez, & Mitchell, 2012). Hope theorists believe that the more life goals an individual is able to attain, higher levels of pathway thinking and agency thinking will be displayed, and the more 'hopeful' the individual will be (Snyder & Lopez, 2009).

Pathway Thinking

Snyder (1994) defines pathway thinking as the 'waypower' in a goal-achieving process. It is an individual's confidence in their personal effective problem-solving and planning skills. Hope theorists believe that individuals with poor problem-solving skills are less likely to make effective plans and therefore are more likely to develop ineffective pathway thoughts, which then lead to perceived lower chances of achieving a goal (lower Hope levels) and subsequent disengagement in the goal-achieving process. Therefore, in order to promote hopeful thinking in individuals, hope theorists believe that it is important to enhance pathway thinking by supporting their problem-solving and action-planning skills (Snyder & Lopez, 2009; Snyder et al., 2003). The relationship between problem-solving skills, Hope, and goal-engagement is supported by past research. Using the Coping Strategies Inventory, past research found that individuals with higher Hope scores had greater problem-solving abilities and were more engaged in their goal-achieving process (Alexander & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Chang, 1998).

Agency Thinking

Agency thinking is the ‘willpower’ in the process of goal attainment. It is a sense of self-motivation that derives from individuals’ perceived capacity to achieve a goal, even when encountering barriers. Hope theorists believe that agency thinking can be increased by self-selecting an internally motivated goal, that is, a goal that is vitally important to them, and be enhanced by increasing the level of pathway thinking (Marques & Lopez, 2011; Snyder & Lopez, 2009). The relationship between agency thinking and Hope was also implied in research by Chang (2003), who found that agency thinking is a strong predictor of individuals’ psychological adjustment, including having less negative views towards adversities and presenting with fewer depressive symptoms.

In summary, Snyder’s hope theory describes Hope as “a positive motivational state that is based on an intensive derived sense of successful agency (goal-directed energy), and pathway (planning to meet goals)” (Snyder & Forsyth, 1991, p. 91). Although Snyder (1994) believes that those three components of Hope carry different meanings, they interact with each other to enhance the sense of hope in individuals.

2.4.2 Criticisms of Snyder’s Hope Theory

Questions have been raised about whether Hope is a distinctive and valid positive psychological construct (Alarcon, Bowling, & Khazon, 2013; Gallagher & Lopez, 2009; Snyder, Feldman, Taylor, Schroeder, & Adams III, 2000; Snyder et al., 2003). In particular, due to their similar idea of promoting

individuals' positive thinking about the future, Hope has often been compared with the construct of 'optimism', another element of positive psychology. As such, Gallagher and Lopez (2009) conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to understand the differences between Hope and optimism. This analysis demonstrated that Hope was associated with the wellbeing variables related to personal control, such as personal growth and autonomy, whereas optimism was not. This indicates that Hope strengthens individuals' internal locus of control, a psychological trait that empowers an individual's sense of agency over his/her general development and wellbeing (Ahlin, 2014; Au, 2015; Meier, Semmer, Elfering, & Jacobshagen, 2008). These findings from Gallagher and Lopez (2009) suggest that Hope is an effective construct that promotes individuals' development of wellbeing, or more hypothetically, equips individuals with the confidence to create their own 'happiness'. This may benefit young people who are susceptible to life adversities, such as those from an MLD special school, by learning to exert control over personal happiness and wellbeing using the Hope construct.

Another criticism of Snyder's hope concept is, similar to other positive psychological constructs, its association with subjective wellbeing, "an umbrella term for the different valuations people make regarding their lives" (Diener, 2006, p. 153). Positive psychologists believe that the process of "reflective cognitive evaluations" involved in an individual's understanding of personal wellbeing contributes to an increased awareness of the frequency of personal emotions, whether positive (e.g. joy) or negative (e.g. sadness), as well as one's appraisal of life satisfaction, which can then have an impact on

one's mental health (Diener, 2006). However, although the research on wellbeing is extensive, consensus on the definition of the term 'wellbeing' has not been reached (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012). This creates a lack of concreteness regarding the impact of subjective wellbeing.

Nevertheless, recent definitions of wellbeing place a heavy emphasis on individuals' self-evaluation of personal life. For instance, the New Economic Foundation (NEF; 2009) defines wellbeing as a dynamic process that allows individuals to have an understanding of how they are, via social interaction and a recognition of their cognitive and psychological resources. Waldron (2010) argues that the emphasis on subjective wellbeing is primarily grounded in different prioritisation of what concerns people the most in life. This awareness has also led recent research to focus more on using subjective, rather than objective, wellbeing as a measure of individuals' psychological states and life satisfaction (Austin, 2015; Schrank, Riches, Coggins, Tylee, & Slade, 2013). It also explains why Snyder's hope concept has been correlated with individuals' development in various aspects, such as sense of self and interpersonal relationships, which will be presented in a later section.

Nevertheless, one major concern about programmes that aim to enhance individuals' subjective wellbeing is the hypothesis regarding subjective wellbeing homeostasis (Cummins, 2010). Recent research conducted with Australian adults and adolescents (Cummins, 2010; Tomy & Cummins, 2010) reported that individuals with a level of subjective wellbeing falling within their personal optimal range are unlikely to sustain their increased levels, even after a successful intervention. This suggests that the immediate effect

observed in these individuals after an intervention programme may not be preserved. However, Cummins (2010) also noted that once an effective intervention has been executed and has successfully raised the individuals' subjective wellbeing to their ideal levels, the individuals tend to gain control over the increased subjective wellbeing and to sustain it. Nevertheless, since both studies were conducted in Australia, the extent to which the conclusions of this research can be applied to individuals of other nations is questionable. Furthermore, the effectiveness of a Hope programme, further discussed in the next section, has been demonstrated in longitudinal research even without considering individuals' level of subjective wellbeing as a covariate (Marques, Lopez, et al., 2011). This suggests that, despite participants' pre-intervention levels of subjective wellbeing, the one raised by a Hope programme is significant and sustainable.

2.5 HOPE PROGRAMMES

Using the hope scales based on Snyder's hope theory (Snyder et al., 1997; later reviewed by Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2004) as the measurement, the relationships between individuals' Hope scores and their general well-being and quality of life were demonstrated. This includes a positive correlation found between children's Hope levels and perceived competence and self-worth (Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2009), life satisfaction and mental health (Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2011; Merkaš & Brajša-Žganec, 2011), academic achievement (Gilman, Dooley, & Florell, 2006; Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, et al., 2011), and interpersonal relationships (Merkaš & Brajša-

Žganec, 2011). Therefore, to support the development of children and young people's wellbeing, researchers have been introducing Hope programmes, aiming to raise Hope in students by teaching it explicitly and systematically in schools. This has been claimed to be a particularly useful curriculum to be used in schools to enhance the levels of Hope in children and young people, to increase their ability to deal with adversity (Snyder & Lopez, 2009), and to promote their positive views about life and the self (Marques, Lopez et al., 2011).

2.5.1 The General Model for a Hope Programme

Marques, Lopez and Robinson (2014, p. 42) reported that the general agenda involved in a Hope programme included the steps listed below. However, Marques et al. (2014) reminded practitioners to not treat this model as an absolute guideline but to tailor the approaches according to students' developmental and learning needs.

1 Learning about Hope

This phase focuses on introducing Snyder's hope theory to the students.

2 Constructing and Structuring Hope

Students are then asked to create a list of areas/subjects that are important to them, and to discuss how satisfied they are with those areas/subjects.

3 *Goal Setting*

In this phase, students are to set a goal based on the identified areas/subjects. With the help of the Hope practitioner, the students then break down their goals into smaller achievable sub-goals, and to subsequently develop multiple pathways to achieve those sub-goals (pathway thinking).

4 *Practice Makes Perfect*

Once the goals have been established, the students are given the opportunity to visualise and verbalise the obstacles they might encounter whilst working toward the goals, and to identify thinking patterns that could motivate them to achieve those goals (agency thinking) via the use of the cognitive-behavioural model taught by the practitioner. The use of other therapeutic techniques, including the narrative and solution-focused therapeutic approaches, may also emerge to help elicit the students' pathway thinking and agency thinking. The incorporation and use of these therapeutic techniques will be detailed in the next section. This practice hopes to support the students' identification of the most effective pathway and agency thoughts to attain their goals. They will then apply those identified pathway and agency thoughts into everyday life.

5 *Checking in*

The practitioner will check in regularly to appraise the appropriateness and efficacy of those identified strategies.

Modifications will be highlighted, if necessary, using the approaches listed under phase 3 and 4.

6 *Review and Recycle*

This refers to the practitioner-student collaboration in their continual assessment of the identified strategies. As soon as the students have grasped the concepts of hope theory and its relevant skills, they will then be assumed to take the responsibility of this review process.

2.5.2 Integrating Therapeutic Techniques into Hope Programmes

This section aims to shed light on how these therapeutic techniques could be integrated into a Hope programme.

2.5.2.1 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Hope Programmes

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a therapeutic approach that helps individuals to manage their problems and anxiety by modifying their perceptions, thoughts and beliefs, and hence behaviours (Fonagy, Target, Cottrell, Phillips, & Kurtz, 2005). Hope practitioners have found that as individuals proceed through the identified pathway towards a goal, the presence of barriers and obstacles often demotivates them. Teaching individuals the CBT model helps them to be more aware of the thinking process that contributes to the emergence of its corresponding actions or emotions. This helps individuals to develop the ability to identify those automatically emerging distorted thoughts, such as “I can never do this”, and

subsequently, with the support of a hope practitioner, learn to modify them to more positive and productive ones. This then results in self-motivation, also known as agency thinking (Taylor, Feldman et al., 2000).

2.5.2.2 Solution-Focused Therapy and Hope Programmes

The primary focus of solution-focused therapy is to find ways around problems (Shazer, Dolan, & Korman, 2007). Solution-focused therapists believe that the resources and solutions to a problem lie within the clients themselves, and they are eager to empower clients to independently find ways to solve a problem. Solution-focused therapists claim that there are always exceptions to a problem, or at least circumstances where the problem appears with a lower level of intensity. The recognition of these exceptions is often the first step to formulating solutions and bringing about change (Shazer et al., 2007).

Hope theorists believe that the emphasis of solution-focused therapy on solution-seeking, as well as on clients as the experts of their lives, encourages the clients to focus on their strengths and progress when reviewing their goal attainment journey. This mind-set directs the clients to focus on the effective strategies and hence the generation of diverse and multiple solutions to an obstacle (pathway thinking), which facilitates their goal attainment. This then imparts the belief in the clients that they are capable of achieving a goal (agency thinking) (Taylor, Cheavens, & Michael, 2000). This hypothesis from hope theorists was supported by recent research that found solution-focused therapy to be effective in improving individuals' approaches

to goals, enhancing their problem-solving skills (pathway thinking) and self-efficacy (agency thinking; Grant & O'Connor, 2010).

2.5.2.3 Narrative Therapy and Hope Programmes

Narrative therapy believes that self-identity is constructed based on one's personal social story created from past experiences (McParland, 2015).

Whether positive or negative, this self-identity directs an individual's thoughts, feelings and behaviours. As a therapeutic approach, one of the major goals of narrative therapy is to help clients to reconstruct an alternative and more satisfying personal story (Westerhof & Bohlmeijer, 2012).

McDermott and Hastings (2000) indicated that narrative therapeutic approaches are significant in supporting students' hopeful thinking. For instance, by inviting students to either engage in a conversation about themselves or write a personal life story/experience, students are encouraged to identify any difficulties s/he has encountered in the past and the corresponding coping strategies. This then promotes a sense of autonomy, a more positive sense of self, and allows the emergence of strategies, which eventually contributes to the development of pathway and agency thinking (Snyder et al., 1997). Although not statistically proven, the effectiveness of using a narrative approach to enhance individuals' pathway and agency thinking was suggested in a recent case study conducted by Sitvast (2013), who recorded the development of her client's problem-solving skills (pathway thinking) and goal-directed behaviours (agency thinking) after implementing the photo stories narrative approach.

Additionally, using the approach of story-telling, reading the narrative of a protagonist or group member who displays hopeful thinking is also considered an appropriate approach to support children's hopeful thinking. According to McDermott and Hastings (2000), the protagonist or group member chosen is likely to present as a positive role model, depicting a high level of persistence despite life adversities (agency thinking) to the children. This also enables children/adolescents to model strategies that were used by the protagonist, promoting pathway thinking. Snyder et al. (1994) advocated for the use of this strategy with younger children or young people with limited literacy development, such as those with learning difficulties.

2.5.2.4 Criticisms of the Therapeutic Approaches in relation to MLD

One major concern of using the therapeutic approaches discussed with young people with MLD is the high demands they make on individuals' cognitive and linguistic skills. Past research has expressed concern regarding the accessibility of such approaches for individuals with learning difficulties (Vereenoghe & Langdon, 2013). Although the effectiveness of the indicated therapeutic approaches has been demonstrated in children with special educational needs, such as those with autism and ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) (Drysdale, Lee, Anderson, & Moore, 2014; Looyeh, Kamali, & Shafieian, 2012), there is a lack of research documenting their effectiveness in promoting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people with learning difficulties.

In particular, when conducting a review on the application of CBT intervention with children and adolescents, James et al. (2015) stated that, despite the noticeable growth of the body of CBT literature, they had surprisingly found that there had been no study conducted specifically with children or adolescents with learning difficulties. Similar results were found in the use of solution-focused (Bond, Woods, Humphrey, Symes, & Green, 2013) and narrative therapy (McParland, 2015). This paucity of research implies the possible challenges arising from the significant cognitive and linguistic delay presented by these children and young people, which could have restricted researchers' attempts at further exploration (Hassiotis et al., 2013; Vereenoghe & Langdon, 2013).

Nonetheless, it is undeniable that researchers and practitioners are showing increasing interest in applying these therapeutic approaches to adults with learning difficulties. For instance, Hassiotis et al. (2013) developed a manualised individual cognitive behavioural therapy to guide practitioners' adoption of CBT with individuals with mild to moderate learning difficulties and mental health difficulties. The suggested approaches demonstrated moderate effectiveness in a statistical analysis conducted with those displaying depressive symptoms. Roeden, Maaskant, and Curfs (2014) have also successfully applied their adapted solution-focused therapy in enhancing the psychological and social functioning of adults with learning difficulties. In terms of narrative therapy, Ward (2012) even took up the challenge of using narrative therapy to support adults with more severe and complex learning difficulties coping with life adversities, such as bereavement.

Although research conducted on children and young people with learning difficulties is still limited, the positive findings from past research suggest that if appropriate approaches were taken, these verbally and cognitively based therapeutic approaches can be made accessible to children and young people with learning difficulties. Past research has also suggested a number of adaptations to be made when using these three therapeutic approaches with individuals with learning difficulties. This includes:

- helping clients to set a therapeutic goal that is relevant to them (Hassiotis et al., 2013);
- providing additional visual aids, such as pictures, drawings, signs and images, to support information processing (Hassiotis et al., 2013; McParland, 2015; Roeden et al., 2014; Wark, 2012);
- using simple language to foster communication and establish shared understanding (Hassiotis et al., 2013; Westerhof, Beernink, & Sools, 2016);
- incorporating hands-on activities into the sessions, such as drawing and role playing (Hassiotis et al., 2013; Roeden et al., 2014);
- providing opportunities for practices to promote overlearning (Hassiotis et al., 2013; Roeden et al., 2014);
- including the client's social agents and conduct the sessions in a natural setting to reinforce the transferability of the skills learnt (Stimpson et al., 2013; Westerhof et al., 2016; Willner et al., 2013);
- using a strengths-based approach by focusing on what they have done well in to promote positive behaviour (Murphy & Davis, 2005; Roeden et al., 2014), and including systemic resources, such as parents and

teachers, to provide information about positive events and behaviours exhibited by the clients to reinforce changes (McParland, 2015).

2.5.3 Using Hope Programmes with Children and Young People

Although research on using Hope programmes with children and young people is developing, it remains limited. Nonetheless, a number of such studies were documented in a book chapter by Lopez et al. (2004), such as the one conducted by Pedrotti, Lopez and Krieschok (2000).

Pedrotti et al.'s research consisted of five weekly 45-minute sessions with a group of 20 seventh graders. Adapted from the Hope programme agenda listed above, Pedrotti et al. introduced Snyder's hope theory (1994) using posters and cartoons, with pictures and images of characters representing the different components of the hope theory, i.e. goal setting, pathway thinking and agency thinking). The students then identified the characters' behaviour that corresponded to the respective Hope components. They were subsequently encouraged to identify a future goal that they would like to work towards and were assigned a 'hope buddy' to encourage mutual monitoring and discussion of their goal attainment process.

In the following sessions, the students were reminded of Snyder's hope theory, using hope stories. They were also taught about the principles of CBT in a 'hope-talk' session, which aimed to promote the students' understanding of how their thoughts and perceptions towards an obstacle determine their feelings and behaviours. The students were also presented with statements made by different characters, including historical and public figures, and to

identify whether they were positive and hopeful. In the last session, the students were invited to review their goal attainment progress. They were asked to write personal hope stories by listing their goal, plan, progress they made, obstacles they encountered and overcame, strategies they found useful to help overcoming obstacles, and the future steps they planned for their goal. The students then shared their story.

Pedrotti et al. showed that compared to the control group, the Hope level, measured using Snyder's hope scale, of students from the intervention group showed a significant increment. This finding was also demonstrated in a six-month follow-up session. However, this study recruited a rather small sample, which puts its generalisation to the wider population into question. The study also did not explore the outcomes that a higher Hope score would bring. Thus, the benefit of the Hope programme was lacking concreteness. This uncertainty was elucidated by more recent research conducted by Feldman and Dreher (2011).

In order to understand the effectiveness of a brief Hope programme session, Feldman and Dreher (2011) conducted a single, 90-minute hope session with a group of 96 young people with an average age of 18.71 years. The session consisted of four major agendas: (a) goal setting, (b) teaching of Snyder's hope theory, (c) identifying the pathway to reach a goal, and (d) identifying possible obstacles and visualising ways to overcome it. Pre- and post-intervention statistical comparisons made between the intervention, placebo and control groups indicated that in addition to participants' Hope scores, a

significant increase in participants' perceived life purpose was also observed. At the one-month follow-up session, participants in the intervention group also scored higher than the other two groups on a self-reported goal attainment survey. However, this research by Feldman and Dreher (2011), as well as the study by Pedrotti et al. (2000, as cited in Lopez et al., 2004) and Snyder's hope theory (1994), were conceived and developed in the USA. Thus, the generalisation of these results to young people of different cultural backgrounds remains uncertain.

In order to elucidate this uncertainty, Marques, Lopez et al. (2011) applied a Hope programme to a middle school in Portugal. Marques, Lopez et al. (2011) used a similar approach to the one outlined in Pedrotti et al.'s research (2000, as cited in Lopez et al., 2004). However, unlike Pedrotti et al., who explained Snyder's hope theory using cartoon characters and posters, the students of Marques, Lopez et al. (2011) acted out the hope theory by pretending to be goals, obstacles, pathways, and willpower (agency), and depicted a meaningful goal pursuit story. The between-group analysis with the control group was positive; the levels of Hope, life satisfaction and self-worth of participants from the intervention group were significantly enhanced, but this was not observed in those in the control group. These positive changes in participants of the intervention group were also observed in the 18-month follow-up assessment, suggesting the longitudinal effect of a Hope programme. Although the findings were based on a relatively small sample (N=62), with disproportionate gender balance (71% female), this research

suggests the generalisability and cultural transferability of the principles of Hope programmes.

In the United Kingdom (UK), recent unpublished research conducted by Egan (2011) also extended the use of a Hope programme to support students' transition to secondary school. Forty-two Year-7 students experiencing difficulties with transition were identified and recruited. Although Egan's approaches were in line with the general model of Hope programmes, in order to create a more accessible intervention programme for her targeted sample of students from the UK, she omitted the activity of reading the American-based hope stories, as adopted in other past research (e.g. Pedrotti et al., 2000, as cited in Lopez et al., 2004). Findings based on Egan's research revealed that compared to participants from the control group, those from the intervention group demonstrated significant improvement in their confidence to problem solve and make plans (pathway thinking). This improvement was also observed in the one-month follow-up study. Additionally, the teachers' ratings of students' behaviour and semi-structured interviews with the students suggest that the Hope programme did help improve the students' goal setting, pathway thinking and agency thinking.

However, due to the lack of research demonstrating the use of a Hope programme with young people with learning difficulties, it is uncertain how a similar programme could be applied with this population, particularly when the therapeutic approaches used, i.e. CBT, solution-focused and narrative therapy, are still inconclusive regarding their effectiveness with young people

with learning difficulties. Additionally, in order to tailor the programme to participants' learning needs and cultural backgrounds, past research adopted slightly different procedures and programme activities. For instance, Marques, Lopez et al.'s (2011) study involved students in acting to facilitate their understanding of Snyder's hope theory (1994), whilst Egan (2011) discarded the reading of the American-based hope stories for her UK students. Therefore, considering past research that suggested the significance of tailoring a wellbeing programme to local contexts (e.g. White, 2016), it is crucial to use the person-centred approach for the exploration of local norms and values, and to inform the application of a Hope programme for young people from an MLD special school setting.

2.6 THE PERSON-CENTRED APPROACH AND EP'S ROLE IN THIS RESEARCH

One of the major highlights of the revised SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) was that all professionals are obliged to use the person-centred approach when working with children and young people. This means that professionals working with children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) should place the welfare, wishes and desires of these children and young people in the centre when making a decision that is relevant to them, by inviting, listening, and acknowledging the views of the children and young people themselves, as well as those of their teachers and parents/carers.

In order to empower children and young people and to enhance their sense of being valued and included, numerous national recommendations that aim to promote the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people have also emphasised the significance of developing partnerships with the young people themselves, their parents/carers and school staff, in the formulation, administration and examination of an intervention programme (Public Health England, 2015, DfE, 2016). This advocacy stemmed from the revised SEND Code of Practice in 2014, which replaced the term 'Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties' with 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties'. This revision urged schools to focus not only on identifying and managing students' challenging behaviours but also to understand the underlying causes and to identify strategies to support students' mental health and wellbeing through collaborating with other professionals to explore and develop strategies that are tailored to their students. As highlighted in the mental health advice for schools (DfE, 2016), this school-professionals collaboration can be achieved by including the voices of children and young people, as well as those of their parents.

The role of educational psychologists (EPs) is multifaceted. However, a common approach is to use a systemic model to promote the welfare of children and young people by collaborating with schools, parents/carers and the children and young people themselves to explore and understand the support they might require to develop to their best potential (The British Psychological Society, 2017). The advocacy of using the person-centred approach to explore and formulate intervention programmes places the EPs in

an ideal and significant position of working systemically with schools, parents/carers and young people to promote their mental health and wellbeing. As past research has highlighted the significance of implementing an evidence-based approach that is informed not only by national initiatives or past research but also the local contexts and values (White, 2016; Wigelsworth et al., 2012), accessing the voices of children and young people marginalised by past research, such as those from an MLD special school, presents as an even more ideal strategy when working with this population. Consequently, as a trainee EP advocating for equal opportunities to be provided to all children and young people, developing a Hope programme that is informed by the voices of these students, as well as those of their parents/carers and teachers, appears to be a significant approach to generate new knowledge to this field of study.

2.7 SUMMARY AND THE PRESENT STUDY

Hope has been perceived as the fundamental element that contributes to individuals' mental health, wellbeing and sense of positivity towards life (Snyder & Lopes, 2009a). Past research has concluded that, compared to typically developing children and young people, those with learning difficulties are prone to developing emotional and mental health difficulties, achieving lower attainment in general, and are at greater risk of exposure to life adversities, which may then contribute to their lower levels of perceived wellbeing (e.g. Allerton et al., 2011; Christensen et al., 2012; Emerson et al., 2010). Some of these difficulties were suggested to be even more salient in

those from special schools (Griffiths, 2007; Norwich & Kelly, 2004). This suggests that there is a great need to cultivate hope in these young people, to equip them with a higher level of subjective wellbeing and the courage and skills to conquer life adversities.

Amongst the various concepts of 'hope' found in past research, to date, Snyder's hope theory appears to provide the most comprehensive definition. Unlike other definitions that either emphasise only the emotional (Mowrer, 1960) or cognitive feature of hope (Erikson, 1964), Snyder's hope theory lays equal emphasis on both features. This theory suggests that hope sparks when one has a positive goal to pursue (goal-setting), believes in one's capacity to make plans to reach a goal and is able to do so (pathway thinking, cognitive feature), and is driven by personal desire to achieve the goal (agency thinking, emotional feature). This concept is congruent with Rutter's (1985) definition of resilience, see Chapter 1, which was adapted by the UK Department for Education (DfE, 2016). This suggests that the principles of Snyder's hope theory, though new, has precedents and is extensive in its concept.

The comprehensiveness of Snyder's hope theory has also led to the development and administration of Hope programmes in schools, aiming to support the subjective wellbeing and infuse hopeful thinking in children and young people by explicitly teaching and naming Hope based on Snyder's hope theory. Past research has demonstrated the significance of using a Hope programme with children and young people of various cultural

backgrounds in the support of their perceived satisfaction with life and a positive sense of self (Feldman & Dreher, 2011; Marques, Lopez, et al., 2011). This suggests the potential and cultural transferability of a Hope programme based on Snyder's hope theory. Therefore, when seeking to understand how to cultivate hope in young people from an MLD special school, the introduced Hope programmes appear an ideal approach to consider.

Nevertheless, although the Hope programmes used in past research had similar agendas, different approaches were applied and tailored to the students' cultural backgrounds and learning needs. Due to the limited research conducted on children or young people with learning difficulties, little is known about how a Hope programme can be applied to this population, particularly those from an MLD special school. Evidence demonstrating the accessibility of the therapeutic approaches integrated with Hope programmes, i.e. cognitive-behavioural, solution-focused, and narrative therapies, to this population is also scarce. Taken together, preliminary work appears necessary for the exploration of the application of a Hope programme used with young people from an MLD special school.

Consequently, considering the value of using the person-centred approach to obtain a holistic and comprehensive exploration that is informed by the needs of the students as well as the local contexts and values, the present study intends to conduct an exploratory case study to elucidate practitioners as to whether and how a Hope programme based on Snyder's hope theory might be relevant and made applicable to young people from an MLD school by

accessing the views of the young people themselves, their teachers and parents/carers with regard to these research questions:

- 1 How are the terms used in the underlying principles of a Hope programme, i.e. hope, goal, pathway thinking and agency thinking, understood by these young people?
- 2 For all participants, what is the relevance and significance of using a Hope programme with young people from this setting?
- 3 According to all participants, how might a Hope programme best be applied in such a setting?
- 4 What are the implications of this research, particularly for young people and schools with similar demographic backgrounds, as well as for the practice of educational psychologists?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to shed light on using Snyder's hope theory to support the wellbeing of young people from an MLD special school by taking into consideration of the perspectives of the young people themselves, their teachers and parents/carers. In order to provide an overview of how this was achieved, this chapter will describe the philosophical, research and data analysis approaches taken. The limitations, ethical considerations and trustworthiness of this research will also be discussed.

3.1 PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH: INTERPRETIVISM

The philosophical approach of this study is interpretivism, which is also known as constructivism. Research philosophy is a set of fundamental assumptions and beliefs as to how the world is perceived (Wahyuni, 2012). A philosophical approach serves as a guideline that affects a researcher's practices (Neuman, 2013). The two fundamental philosophical theories that affect a researcher's selection of research paradigms are ontology and epistemology (Wahyuni, 2012).

In brief, ontology refers to the nature of reality, whereas epistemology refers to what constitutes reality (Kalof & Dan, 2008; Neuman, 2013). Ontologically, interpretive researchers believe that 'reality' is socially constructed and subjective. 'Reality' is complex, as it may vary for subjects from different social backgrounds and experiences. Therefore, reality may change and is

diverse in nature. This also means that, instead of focusing on generalising reality, interpretivists value the distinctive perspectives of their participants, which are derived specifically from their experiences and beliefs (Wahyuni, 2012). Epistemologically, interpretive researchers believe that reality and meaning are accessed through language and shared meanings.

Consequently, the role of interpretive researchers is to access the participants' perceptions of reality through interacting or having a dialogue with them (Scott & Usher, 2010).

Interpretive researchers believe that the researcher is the interpreter of the participants' meaning of reality (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary for researchers to participate and interact with participants to understand their perceptions of reality. As informed by the interpretivist approach, participants of this research were invited to either a focus group or a semi-structured interview, allowing the researcher to interact directly with them (through interviews) and to begin to identify the arising themes related to the research topic.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Robson (2011) describes a case study as a research approach that is particular in itself, that is, a study of a specific case in a specific setting. This is a small-scale exploratory study focusing specifically on the views of a group of four young people from an MLD special school, their teachers and parents in regard to the relevance and application of a Hope programme to promote

the wellbeing of students of the school. Thus, the case study approach was selected as the research design.

Case studies are categorised into three major types: descriptive, explanatory and exploratory. Unlike a descriptive case study that focuses on expanding a theory, or an explanatory case study that focuses on making causal statements, an exploratory case study is distinctive in its role in serving as a preliminary study, to explore a field that is lacking in research (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). The nature of an exploratory case study is congruent with the rationale of the present study and, therefore, was chosen to form a basic guideline for the construction of research methods. More specifically, given the philosophical approach of the present study, the qualitative exploratory case study approach was deemed most appropriate.

As a research strategy, similar to other types of case study, a qualitative exploratory case study provides a significant level of flexibility in its approach to data collection (Mills et al., 2010). However, due to the nature of qualitative research, one of the major drawbacks of a qualitative exploratory case study is that it yields non-numerical data. This means that it cannot be approached statistically and therefore its generalisation to the larger population could be limited. Nonetheless, similar to other qualitative research designs, the main feature of a qualitative exploratory case study is that researchers believe that reality is socially constructed and diverse. This assumption is based on the notion that people make sense of their experiences differently and may hold different perspectives with regard to the same phenomenon. Thus, the value

of a study lies in uncovering these diverse perspectives. Researchers using this approach believe that these perspectives are unobservable and unquantifiable. Therefore, they are interested in understanding reality from the participants' perspectives as well as from the interpretation the researcher has developed throughout his/her interaction with the participants (Merriam, 2015). This concept of research design is in line with the philosophical approach underpinning this research (interpretivism), which highlights the researcher's role as the interpreter of the participants' perception of reality.

Yin (2015) cautions researchers about the importance of using multiple methods to enhance the trustworthiness of case study research. This includes using different research methods or collecting data from different sources. Taking this advice into consideration, this study used both focus groups and semi-structured interviews to gather the perspectives of three different groups of participants (students, parents and teachers) regarding the proposed research topic. This also allowed for the emergence of a more in-depth data collection and analysis. In order for a richer interpretation to take place, the school demographic background was also taken into consideration during data analysis and reporting (also see Chapter 4). Details of the research method and procedure will be presented in the following sections.

3.3 METHODS

3.3.1 Sampling

3.3.1.1 School

The school recruited in this study was a convenience and purposive sample. It was the only MLD special school in the local area where I was on placement. The school catered primarily for local students with MLD. It was located on two sites, primary and secondary, which were approximately one mile apart. As recorded in the school self-evaluation form in autumn 2015 (see Appendix B), the school had 112 pupils aged between 5 to 18 years and expanded to 19 years in September 2016, with two-thirds of students in the secondary department. This research was conducted within the secondary department (referred to here as 'the school'). It was co-located with a mainstream secondary school, with shared dining and sports facilities. The school established a new sixth form for Year 12 and 13 students with special needs in 2012.

There has been an increase in the number of students with severe and complex learning difficulties, as well as emotional and behavioural difficulties, since 2012. Approximately two-thirds of the students were from minority ethnic backgrounds. Although the school was classified by Ofsted as Outstanding, Ofsted (2012, p. 3) suggested that the school "increase the proportion of students in the school who make rapid progress and reach high standards by the time they leave school". A recent Ofsted report (2015) also suggested the school to be more consistent in promoting a high standard of student behaviour (see Appendix B). As a special school, in addition to

supporting students' basic learning skills and academic achievement, the school curriculum has also been designed to focus on supporting students' development of functional, independence and work skills.

The school was reputed for its holistic approach in accommodating and promoting the learning, social, emotional and mental health needs of children and young people with MLD. It has also been used as a case study by Children and Adult Mental Health Services. The school adopted the strengths-based approach in which they identified not only students' problematic behaviours but were (more) inclined to celebrate students' success. This educational notion was in line with positive psychology, the underpinning psychological concept of the present study. Since a positive institution is recognised as fundamental to the implementation of the strengths-based approach (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), this school was, therefore, ideal for the implementation of this research project.

Using the person-centred approach was a novel protocol for most local schools, including this school. Nevertheless, the school has recently incorporated the idea of enquiry-based learning (e.g., Philosophy for Children (P4C)) in their curriculum, hoping that students would learn the value of their thoughts and views, as well as those of others, as the first step in accessing their voices. This suggests that the person-centred approach, though new to the local context, has been encouraged and practised within the school. However, perhaps due to the challenges of eliciting students' views and the unfamiliarity with other possible approaches of the person-centred model,

students' voices, though much appreciated, appeared as not being thoroughly accessed in the school. This includes incorporating the opinions of students in the formulation of an intervention strategy/programme. Thus, as a piece of applied educational psychology research, this study intended to maximise the school's use of person-centred and strengths-based approaches by illuminating how the principles of a wellbeing (Hope) programme could be applied and tailored to the needs of their students.

3.3.1.2 The Students and Parents

The students were recruited by convenience and purposive sampling of the above-mentioned school. The school was first approached by the researcher to obtain consent for being involved in this research. See Appendix C for examples of the information sheet and informed consent form for the school/Head Teacher.

Once the school had agreed to participate, the students were shortlisted with the support of the school Key Stage 4 Manager. The selected students were all diagnosed with MLD. Considering the nature and objective of the research, which could make high demands on participants' expressive and receptive language skills, the students were also chosen based on the absence of any significant language skill difficulties. The recruited students were to engage in focus group interview sessions; therefore, their capacity to interact and engage positively in a group context was also listed as one of the selection criteria. As this research aimed to include the views of the parents/carers of

the students, students of parents/carers whom the school identified as more likely to consent and participate in the research were prioritised.

The researcher then observed the shortlisted students in class, with the objective of assessing their language skills and capacity to engage in adult-led group discussion. The observation also aided in tailoring the research approach to the students' language needs and capacity to follow group tasks. The Key Stage 4 Manager subsequently contacted the parents/carers of the selected students to obtain their consent for their and their child's participation in the research. The researcher later contacted the parents by phone, prior to meeting their child, for an introduction and to clarify any queries the parents had. Appendix D contains samples of the information sheet and informed consent form for parents/carers.

In order to ensure informed choices were made by the students, those with parental consent were then approached by the researcher. The researcher verbally explained the research purpose and procedure to the students individually, using the information sheet as a guideline (see Appendix E), and sought their agreement to participate. A total number of four students, two males and two females, and four parents were recruited. The demographics of the students are illustrated in Table 1, using pseudonyms. The parents were the mothers of the recruited students, who were aged between 40 and 55 years.

Table 1
Student Demographics

Student	Sex	Year group	Ethnicity	Diagnosis received
Amy	Female	Year 11	Black African	MLD / Autistic Spectrum Disorder
Ben	Male	Year 12	White	MLD
Cat	Female	Year 10	Black African	MLD
Dan	Male	Year 10	White	MLD / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Amy

Apart from MLD, Amy also has a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a neurodevelopmental difficulty that may have an impact on her social communication and interaction skills (The National Autistic Society, 2016). The Key Stage 4 Manager reported that Amy can be anxious when interacting with people with whom she is not familiar. However, the in-class observation of Amy suggested that she had the confidence to share her ideas and to contribute effectively in a reading group of six, led by her literacy teacher.

Ben

Ben was one of the students currently enrolled in the school's sixth form. Ben appeared highly confident during the in-class observation and was able to show a high level of on-task attention. Ben was highly engaged in a writing group of three, sharing and discussing his ideas about writing a book review. The Key Stage 4 Manager indicated that Ben might have difficulties

comprehending questions at times. Therefore, it was suggested to check in often with him and to sensitively redirect him to the questions posed.

Cat

Cat appeared quiet and soft-spoken during the in-class observation. Although she did not often volunteer to share during the discussion in a group of three, she was often able to do so when prompted by the teacher. Cat was also observed to have formed a rather positive interaction and relationship with most students and adults, which had enhanced the dynamic of the group discussion. The Key Stage 4 Manager described her as a student who “is very creative” and “has lots of ideas” but might need more encouragement from adults to share her views.

Dan

Apart from MLD, Dan also carried a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which might affect his capacity to sustain his on-task attention. The Key Stage 4 Manager indicated that in order to enhance the group dynamic and to facilitate the research process, it was important to set clear boundaries with Dan in the beginning of the session, to enable his understanding of the expected behaviour and demonstrate it. Dan was highly articulate. He was in the same class with Cat and had formed a rather positive relationship with her. It was hoped that this could serve as a catalyst to enhance Cat’s engagement, as well as the entire research group dynamic.

3.3.1.3 Teachers

The teacher-participants were identified by the school. This decision was based on the availability of the teachers during the school assembly held a week after the focus group with the students. Due to staffing issues, only two school staff were recruited. They were a Year 10 class teacher (male) and a learning support assistant (female). In order to facilitate the identification of responses in Chapter 4 Findings, pseudonyms were used: Mr Eric refers to the Year 10 class teacher whilst Ms Faye refers to the learning support assistant. They have both had experience of working with the recruited students. The learning-support assistant² had previously sat in the first session of the focus group to support the students. Oral consents from the selected teachers were obtained before providing details on the research procedure during the focus-group interview session. Appendix F contains examples of the information sheet and informed consent form for teachers.

3.3.2 Development of Interview Guides

3.3.2.1 Students

Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher and Sabshin (1981, p. 27) suggested four types of questions to effectively elicit interviewees' responses with regard to the development of a programme. Table 2 presents the types of questions suggested and their respective descriptions.

Table 2

Types and Descriptions of the Questions Suggested by Strauss et al.

² The term 'teachers' is used from this point onwards when referring to both the recruited teacher-participants.

Type of Question	Description
Hypothetical questions	Require the participants to share their thoughts about what they would do in a presumed situation, using a less personal approach to elicit participants' descriptions of an actual situation.
Devil's advocate questions	Challenge the participants to consider a controversial view, to elicit responses with regard to topics that are considered too sensitive to discuss.
Ideal position questions	Participants' descriptions of what an ideal programme would entail, which might provide insights into how a programme can be improved.
Interpretive questions	Provide the researcher opportunities to clarify his/her understanding of the participants' responses, to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

Using Strauss et al.'s (1981) suggestions as guidelines, the interview guide was developed in an accessible and personalised manner by helping the students to relate the questions to their personal experiences in hope of enhancing the participants' levels of engagement and to enable their sharing of personal views. In addition, Patton's (2015) suggestion of using experience-based questions was also adopted. Such questions highlight the importance of relating the topics to be discussed to participants' past experiences, as an approach to engage them. It was anticipated that this would allow the students to relate their past experiences to the Hope theory introduced, hence enhancing the 'concreteness' of the theory, and in turn reinforced their discussion. Table 3 presented some of the examples of the

questions used in the interview guide for students, based on Strauss et al. (1981) and Patton's (2015) suggestions. See Appendix G for the complete interview guide.

Table 3
Types of Questions Used with Students in Phase 1

Type of Question	Example
Hypothetical questions	<p>"Have you been in a situation where you have a goal, there is something that you want, but you think 'nah, I don't think I can do that' or 'nah, I don't know how to get that'?"</p> <p>Imagine you are now in that situation, what support do you think you'll need to help you get what you want?"</p>
Devil's advocate questions	"What might make your friend not interested to join (a programme like this)?"
Ideal position questions	"What will interest your friend to join (a programme like this)?"
Interpretive questions	"So having hope makes you feel good and positive? Is that right?"
Experience-based questions	"Think about the biggest goal you have achieved last year..... tell me how you achieved that goal?"

3.3.2.2 Teachers

The interview guide developed for the teachers and parents aimed to elicit their perspectives with regard to using a Hope programme in the school, as well as their views about the students' suggested hope programme

approaches (refers to 'hope-approaches' here). See the Data Collection section for the descriptions of the different phases and Appendix H, Table 7 for the complete list of the students' suggested 'hope-approaches' presented to the teachers.

To ensure the accessibility and relevance of the interview guide, three trainee educational psychologists (EPs) and both research supervisors were invited to review the interview guide. Since the person-centred approach (accessing pupils' voices) was one significant approach highlighted and one of the important aspects of a Hope programme was to support students to set and reach a future goal of their choice, both trainee EPs and supervisors suggested beginning the session by inviting the teachers to reflect on a challenging situation they had encountered in the past when using the person-centred approach with the students. This could be an effective strategy to enhance the value of this research to the teachers, as well as to facilitate their reflection on the challenges they might face if a Hope programme was to be adopted in the school.

The initial interview guide used had only presented the students' suggested 'hope-approaches' and the teachers were invited to share their views with regard to the relevance and appropriateness of the suggestions. However, it was suggested by supervisors that in order to engage both the teacher- and parent-groups, it was important to talk them through the research procedure conducted with the students and present them with some of the students' responses derived from the four sessions as concrete examples of the

discussion. Therefore, the interview guide used was adapted accordingly, using randomly selected and anonymised students' responses to safeguard their confidentiality.

Hope programmes are mainly school-based and do not emphasise the role of parents. However, past research has indicated the significance of involving parents in therapeutic approaches aimed to support the wellbeing of individuals with MLD (e.g. McParland, 2015). Therefore, 'the role of parents' was also added to the interview schedule used with the teacher- and parent-groups. In order to facilitate the research process and the teachers' understanding of the information presented, a copy of handouts consisting of relevant diagrams and tables included in the interview guide (see Appendix H) was also prepared for each teacher.

3.3.2.3 Parents

Similar to the interview guide for teachers, the interview guide developed for the parents was first reviewed with three trainee EPs to ensure its accessibility. It was suggested that some questions were too generic and could make it challenging for parents to provide constructive responses. Consequently, a number of closed-ended questions were added to prompt the parents' responses, which were then followed by open-ended follow-up questions to probe for richer descriptions. For instance, the question "What is the potential of conducting a programme using this theory with your child?" was rephrased as "Do you think a programme developed using the hope theory can be made useful for your child? What makes you think so?" It was

also suggested that some of the phrases used might not be accessible to parents, hence, they were replaced with more common phrases. For instance, the question “What is that about the programme that might interest your child?” was changed to “If this programme has been developed, using the approaches we have discussed here, what would your child like about it?”

The interview guide was then reviewed with supervisors during a research supervision session, including a summary of the research procedure. It was suggested that the interview should begin with the question “Has your child mentioned anything to you about what we did before?”, as a rapport-building approach, and to obtain a brief understanding of the parents’ perceptions of the research and Hope programmes. A handout with relevant visual images included in the interview guide (see Appendix I) was also added to aid the parents’ understanding of the information presented.

3.3.3 Pilot

3.3.3.1 Students

Merriam (2015) suggested the significance of pilot interviews in the formulation of good interview questions. Due to concerns about the complexity of the terms used to describe the principles of Snyder’s hope theory to the students, which might affect their engagement, a pilot interview was conducted with one of the Year 11 students from the school. Although conducting a pilot focus-group interview might yield a better outcome and more productive reflection, due to the limited number of students available for

recruitment, an individual pilot interview was conducted instead to inform the construction of the interview guideline.

In addition, Merriam (2015) highlighted the significance of using familiar language when engaging participants in the interview process. Therefore, the terms used to describe the principles of Snyder's hope theory (1994) were simplified. In particular, 'plan' and 'motivation' were substituted for the terms 'pathway thinking' and 'agency thinking'. These substitutions were derived from Snyder's description (1994) of pathway thinking as relevant to individuals' planning skills, such as making a variety of plans to reach a goal and deciding what to do when encountering obstacles (problem-solving), whereas agency thinking involves motivating oneself. This change of term resulted from a number of supervision sessions with research supervisors as well as the advice of the Key Stage 4 Manager who suggested these terms might be more accessible for the students. As a result, the terms used to present Snyder's hope theory were 'hope', 'goal', 'plan' and 'motivation'. The student recruited for the pilot interview showed understanding of the terms used when asked to explain (e.g., "motivation means be determined to do what you want to do"), but the responses provided often lacked descriptions.

The pilot student particularly struggled with broad open-ended questions with which he had no prior experience, particularly questions about how Snyder's hope theory could be applied to support his achievement of goals. However, the student was able to respond when the question was more specific with options provided, followed by prompting questions. For instance, he was able

to indicate the utility of breaking a big goal into smaller steps in that it would provide him with a clearer picture of the steps required to achieve his goal (“so that I know what I need to do”). This suggested that the students recruited for this research might also find it challenging to provide ideas of how the hope theory should be operationalised, as they had yet to participate in such a programme. Thus, a summary consisting of 15 randomly selected approaches used in a Hope programme and past research suggested therapeutic adaptations, when conducting cognitive-behavioural, solution-focused and narrative therapy with individuals with learning difficulties, was created and shared with the students (see Appendix G, Table 6). This summary aimed to serve as a prompt to elicit deeper discussion amongst the students as to whether or not those presented approaches were useful to support their achievement of a goal. It was hoped that this would provide insight into the exploration of other possible non-listed approaches.

Broad open-ended questions without the introduction of contextual information or concrete examples were also challenging to the pilot student. For instance, he was not able to answer questions such as “What is your plan to achieve your goal?” but was better able to do so when asked “so you mentioned that your goal is to get into college, what is your plan for getting into college?” Therefore, the interview guide was amended accordingly by posing the questions in a more specific manner, such as, “Using your ‘goal’ as an example, what is your plan for your goal?” The student was also better able to respond to and was more engaged with questions supported by visual aids, such as keywords or diagrams. Therefore, in order to enhance the student-

participants' understanding of the questions posed, as well as their capacity to engage, power-point slides consisting of diagrams, graphs and keywords included in the interview guide were integrated in their focus group interview sessions.

3.3.3.2 Teachers

An individual pilot interview session was arranged with the Key Stage 4 Manager two days before the focus-group interview session with the teachers. The following questions were used to elicit his feedback.

- Is there any word/question that you think might need more clarification?
- Is it better if I replace it with (a substituted word or question)?
- Is there any other question that you think would be good to explore but has not been raised?

The Key Stage 4 Manager indicated that both the procedure and interview questions were clear to him, but he was uncertain about the first question asked ("What are your thoughts about what has been presented so far?"). Therefore, a prompt question was added to the initial interview guide to ensure the responses provided were diversified and relevant to the research questions. See Appendix H for the interview guide used with the teachers.

3.3.3.3 Parents

The Key Stage 4 Manager, who had vast experience working with parents of the school, was invited to review the interview guide. The guide was sent to

him via email a day after the focus group interview with the teachers, along with the prompting questions used above to obtain his feedback. Responses from the first parent were also reviewed, as a way to tailor the research procedure and interview questions to a level that was more accessible to the parents. Both the Key Stage 4 Manager and the responses from the first parent suggested that the interview guide was appropriately phrased. The interview guide used with the parents is located in Appendix I.

3.3.4 Data Collection

In order to enhance the reliability of the data collected, this research was divided into two phases for the triangulation of the information collected. Phase 1 consisted of four focus group interview sessions with the students, whilst Phase 2 was composed of a focus group interview session with the teachers and four individual semi-structured interview sessions with the parents.

3.3.4.1 Focus Group Interview

A focus group interview is an interview with a group of participants believed to be sharing knowledge on a discussion topic (Merriam, 2015). It allows the researcher to establish a direct interaction with the participants. This provides the researcher opportunities to clarify interesting responses by asking follow-up questions with the objective of exploring a topic further, hence obtaining more diversified and in-depth responses in the participants' own words (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). Considering the philosophical framework of the current research (interpretivism) where the aim was to use the researcher-

participant interaction to explore the participants' perspectives with regard to the relevance and operationalisation of a Hope programme for students of the school, this approach was deemed appropriate.

Although a focus group interview was criticised for its decreased opportunities for more in-depth exploration of interesting responses, compared to an individual interview, a focus group interview encourages the revelation and exchange of ideas and views amongst the participants, which could then contribute to a more comprehensive and in-depth information sharing process (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). This process of interview is considered more appropriate for individuals who are less articulate or literate, as well as for topics with which participants are less familiar (Merriam, 2015; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). The students recruited were a group of young people with learning difficulties who required a high level of visual and verbal prompting to facilitate their engagement. According to the Key Stage 4 Manager, they knew each other very well. Some of them also had low self-esteem, meaning they could be withdrawn in a social situation without the company of someone familiar. Thus, a focus group, instead of individual interviews, appeared an ideal data collection approach. As the topic to be discussed – Hope programme – was one with which the teachers were not familiar, therefore, a focus group interview was also deemed appropriate to elicit more descriptive data from the teachers by encouraging their revelation and exchange of perspectives.

However, it was also argued that responses using a focus group interview may be dominated by more literate and opinionated participants, which may affect the originality of the data collected (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). This was a particular concern for the sessions with the students in which the Key Stage 4 Manager indicated that some of the students might not have developed appropriate levels of sensibility towards social and turn-taking skills. To address this issue, the focus group interview with the students began with an ice-breaker activity (see Procedure section). This approach was intended to enhance the group dynamic. A number of ground rules were also set with the students at the beginning of the session, including giving everyone the opportunity to speak, to ensure that the students had equal opportunities to share their views. As a trainee EP, and also the moderator of the focus-group interview, I had vast experience working with groups. This allowed me to create a non-threatening environment that encouraged group sharing, receive the participants' responses with an open mind, using probing questions adequately and promptly, and to ensure that all participants had equal chances to share their perspectives.

3.3.4.2 Individual Semi-Structured Interview

Considering participants' unfamiliarity with the discussed topic, I initially intended to conduct a focus group interview with all three sets of participants (students, parents and teachers). However, due to difficulties arranging a schedule and venue that suited all parent-participants, four individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the parents instead.

A semi-structured interview is an interview that is designed according to the researcher's research objective, whilst attempting to explore participants' perspectives with regard to a studied phenomenon. Similar to a focus group interview, the process of an individual semi-structured interview requires the researcher's interpretation of participants' responses with regard to the questions posed, by clarifying or posing further questions (Brinkmann, 2013). Although such an interview does not offer the advantage of utilising group interaction to deepen the discussion, as a focus group interview does, it allows the researcher to tailor the interview process according to individual respondent's needs and pace (Merriam, 2015). This could also feel more comfortable for the parents, who were not familiar with each other or the interview process.

Furthermore, unlike a structured interview, which is more rigid, or an unstructured interview, wherein the interview process is mainly guided by participants' responses, the nature of a semi-structured interview allows the researcher to orient an interview session to create a well-balanced researcher- and respondent-driven interview. This is an advantage, as it provided guidelines for the researcher to ensure the data collected was relevant to the research questions, whilst allowing further exploration of responses that piqued the interests of both parties.

3.3.4.3 Procedure

3.3.4.3.1 Phase 1

The students participated in Phase 1. Taking into consideration the cognitive, verbal and emotional needs of the students, Phase 1 was divided into four sessions to allow time for rapport building and opportunities for reflection on each session, as well as to tailor the next session accordingly for further exploration of the research questions. Each session lasted for approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The main focus of each session was discussed with research supervisors to increase the likelihood of exploring the students' views about the research topic and to diversify their responses.

Table 4
Focus of Each Session

Session	Main Focus
1	Using the students' future goals as an example to explore their understanding of the terms used in Snyder's hope theory, i.e. hope, goal, plan, and motivation, and the relevance and significance of the theory to them.
2	Using the students' example of a goal they achieved in the past to explore their understanding of the terms above and the relevance and significance of using a Hope programme with them.
3	Explore how a Hope programme might be applied to the students.
4	Inviting the students to act as a facilitator to explore their understanding of the terms above and the relevance, significance and application of a Hope programme with them.

Session 4 was initially designed to review the students' responses to ensure their accuracy. However, due to the poor group dynamic resulting from a student having to leave the room as a result of his anxiety, Session 4 was redesigned to diversify the students' responses with regard to the research topic. In order to fit the interview guide to the students' level of understanding and capacity to engage, the interview guide for the next session was reviewed after each session. See the subsections below for the respective procedures used in each session.

General Procedure in Phase 1

At the beginning of each session, the picture illustrating a blossoming flower, depicted in Figure 1 below, was used to remind the students of the number of sessions remaining. It was also used as a metaphor to help the students understand the purpose of the research, which was to explore the application of a Hope programme with the students' input, using the blossoming flower to symbolise a fruitful final product as a result of their contributions.



Figure 1. Picture of a blossoming flower used as a metaphor to remind the students of the number of sessions remaining.

In order to better prepare the students for each session, before the session began, the students were briefly introduced to the agenda and activities of the session. At the end of each session, they were also briefed on the agenda and activities of the next session. The students were also reminded of the importance of clarifying any uncertainties or questions they might have throughout every session.

Considering the presenting emotional needs of some of the students (see Sampling section), a teaching assistant was invited to act as a supporting figure for the students during the session. However, due to staffing issues, each session was attended by a different teaching assistant. All teaching assistants remained silent throughout the process and did not interfere with the research process apart from addressing the students' emotional and basic needs, such as accompanying the students when they needed to leave the room or passing them water when requested. In order to obtain a clearer picture of how each session was administered, the following descriptions of the procedure used in each session should be read in conjunction with Appendix G.

Phase 1: Session 1

In order to enhance the group dynamic, Session 1 began with a self-introduction and an ice-breaker activity. I first introduced myself by stating my name, my role, and the purpose of the research. This was then followed by a

reminder of the students' rights to withdraw and terminate their participation, the audio-recording of their responses, anonymity, and the school safeguarding policy. The students subsequently introduced themselves, by stating their names and one special thing about themselves.

After the self-introduction, an icebreaker activity – Draw Something – was then conducted. The students were each asked to draw a cursive line on their own blank sheet of A4 paper. They then passed their paper (with a cursive line on it) to the student sitting on their right-hand side. The students were then asked to add something to that cursive line passed to them to make it a piece of artwork or a picture. This procedure was repeated until each drawing reached the last student, that is, the student who was sitting to the left of the paper-owner. At the end of the activity, it was explained to the students that their participation in this research project was similar to the ice-breaker activity, in which the participation and views of each student were as important and valuable as the others.

These activities were followed by inviting the students to share their views about the meaning of the terms 'hope' and 'goal'. In order to provide a more concrete example to facilitate their understanding of Snyder's hope theory and to facilitate the exploration of the relevance and application of a Hope programme to them, they were then asked to identify a future goal that they would like to achieve. Snyder's hope theory was subsequently introduced using a diagram illustrating the three major components of Snyder's hope concept (see Appendix G), i.e. goal, pathway thinking (refers to plan here)

and agency thinking (refers to motivation here). The students were invited to explain the meaning of the term 'plan', and subsequently to draw out a plan to reach their identified goal. This was done to explore the students' understanding of the term 'plan' and to identify the agendas involved in their planning. The students were later asked to share their understanding of the term 'motivation'. In order to facilitate the review of students' responses and their understanding of Snyder's hope theory, the students' explanations were incorporated into the diagram used earlier to explain Snyder's hope theory, as illustrated in Figure 2 below. To further explore whether Snyder's hope theory was perceived as relevant to the students, Session 1 was concluded by eliciting the students' opinions about the diagram in Figure 2 as to whether or not they would agree and why.

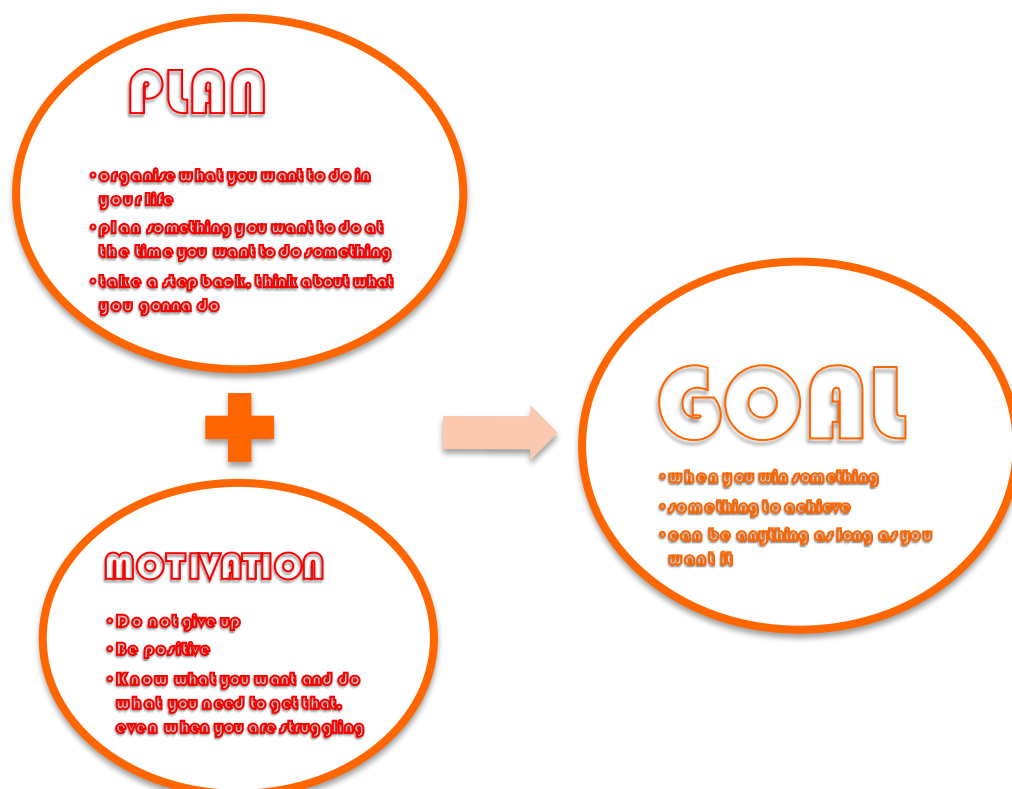


Figure 2. Diagram used to explain Snyder's hope theory using some of the examples provided by the students.

Phase 1: Session 2

In order to diversify the students' responses from Session 1, Session 2 invited the students to share their past experience of achieving a goal, aiming to better engage them in the discussion. Using Figure 2, Snyder's hope theory was revised. The students were subsequently invited to recall a significant goal they achieved last year and to describe how they achieved it. They were given 10 minutes to write down their responses on the diagram printed on a piece of paper distributed to them (see Appendix G). The students were then invited to share as a group. During the group sharing, they were prompted to provide details on the process of achieving their goal, using the questions listed in Appendix G.

Phase 1: Session 3

Session 3 focuses on further exploring the application of a Hope programme. The 15 'hope-approaches' randomly selected from past research suggested approaches for a Hope programme and therapeutic adaptations were shared with the students (see Appendix G, Table 6). As indicated earlier, this approach aimed to elicit deeper discussion amongst the students as to whether and why those shared approaches were useful additions to a Hope programme, as well as to serve as a prompt to enlighten students' discussion and suggestion of other possible strategies.

However, in the beginning of the session, one of the students (Ben) had to leave the room with the company of the teaching assistant supporting the session, due to an unexpected emergence of intense anxiety. This impacted the group dynamic, which may have also been affected by the complexity of this task. Although an interactive activity (the “Line-up Game”³) was adopted to ameliorate the group dynamic, the interaction amongst the students was still limited and hence affected the data collected for this session.

Phase 1: Session 4

Considering the limited data collected from Session 3, it was reflected during supervision that the students’ responses could be diversified by encouraging them to act as a facilitator of the programme and to share strategies regarding how they would support their friends to achieve a goal. According to Strauss et al.’s (1981) ‘Hypothetical Question’, this might be a less personal approach to encourage sharing of information by the students.

The students first wrote down the name of a friend who was in the school but not in the research group to remind them of the friend they had in mind. The students were then invited to imagine explaining the terms used in Snyder’s hope theory (Hope, goal, plan and motivation) to this friend and to share their ideas of how they would help this friend achieve his/her goal. As a means of diversifying responses with regard to the relevance of using a Hope programme with the students, they were invited to share what they thought their friends would learn from joining such a programme and how they

³ See Appendix J for a description of the game.

themselves would feel if they had a goal, a clear plan to achieve the goal and mastery of strategies to motivate themselves. In order to expand upon their responses, the students were then asked to describe what might and might not interest their friends in joining a programme developed with Snyder's hope theory.

3.3.4.3.2 Phase 2

Phase 2 with Teachers

Two teachers were interviewed in the focus group. They were first given five minutes to read the information sheet and were encouraged to clarify any uncertainties before signing the consent form, as well as throughout the focus-group interview. In order to facilitate the teachers' understanding of the information presented, a handout consisting of diagrams and tables, included in Appendix H, was distributed to each of them. The focus group interview began by inviting the teachers to recall a situation where they found it particularly challenging to use the person-centred approach with their students. As Snyder's hope theory focuses on the future and the school placed a strong emphasis on supporting the students' independence after secondary school, relevant questions were directed to accessing pupils' views of their future.

The teachers were subsequently introduced to Snyder's hope theory, the agenda of each session in Phase 1 with the students, and finally the students' responses. This included the students' understanding of the terms used in Snyder's hope theory and the students' suggested 'hope-approaches'. Direct

quotes from the students' responses were included to enhance the teachers' understanding of how the data was derived. This also aimed to enhance the trustworthiness of this phase by reducing the level of subjectivity resulting from the researcher's prior knowledge. In order to increase accessibility for the teachers, the students' suggested 'hope-approaches' were categorised into different themes, as presented in Appendix H, Table 7. The teachers were then invited to share their views and to discuss the relevance and appropriateness of the suggested approaches to their students. The teachers were also invited to share their views about parental involvement. The focus-group interview with the teachers lasted for approximately 45 minutes.

Phase 2 with Parents

Four home visits for the individual semi-structured interview with the parents were arranged at a time slot that was convenient to each parent. On the day of the interview, the researcher reviewed the information sheet with the parents again to remind them of the research purpose, procedure, their rights to withdraw and the anonymity of their identity. For rapport-building purposes, the parents were first asked if their child had spoken to them about the research. In order to facilitate the parents' understanding of the theoretical framework underpinning the research project and a Hope programme, they were then introduced to Snyder's hope theory. The parents received a handout summarising the agenda and students' responses in Phase 1, as included in Appendix I. Their views on the relevance and operationalisation of the students' proposed 'hope-approaches' were then explored using the

interview schedule listed in Appendix I. Each parent interview session lasted for approximately 30 minutes.

Probing questions such as “could you tell me a bit more?” and “anything else you would like to add?” were used throughout the sessions in both phases to diversify the interviewees’ responses and to establish shared understanding. In order to ensure participants’ responses were interpreted accurately, active listening and interpretation questions, such as summarising the participants’ responses, and clarification questions, such as “have I understood you correctly?” were also used.

3.3.4.4 Data Analysis

3.3.4.4.1 Overall approach

Braun and Clarke’s (2006) procedure of thematic analysis, “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 6) was used to systematically code and analyse the themes derived from the participants’ responses. It involves the researcher’s interpretation of the meaning, experiences and reality of the participants, which is congruent with the philosophical approach of the present study.

There are a number of reasons for the selection of this approach to data analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a flexible approach in that it can be applied across a variety of research philosophical stances, including interpretivism. Braun and Clarke (2006) also highlight the particular usefulness of thematic analysis when analysing data including

participants as collaborators, such as interviews, as it values participants' responses. Due to its flexibility, thematic analysis also allows the researcher to determine the approach to identifying and analysing themes from data. In particular, the inductive approach describes the process of coding and analysis as data driven. This process is strongly linked to the data collected and has little relationship to the pre-existing theoretical model or framework, or to the researcher's presumptions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The main objective of this research was to understand the relevance and operationalisation of a Hope programme for young people from an MLD special school. Due to the unique experience of these young people, the inductive approach of thematic analysis was deemed appropriate to uncover richer and more descriptive data. The section below outlines details of this procedure.

Nevertheless, thematic analysis has also drawn criticism due to its flexibility, as it is an approach that lacks clear and systematic guidelines. This makes it a poorly conceptualised data analysis approach, in which the trustworthiness of its research findings is likely to be questioned (Antaki, Billig, Edwards, & Potter, 2003). In response to this criticism, Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a 6-step thematic analysis approach, used in this study, to serve as a guideline for a more systematic analysis and reporting of data, as well as for enhancing the transparency and trustworthiness of qualitative research findings. Its application is detailed in the next section.

3.3.4.4.2 Procedure

Following an inductive thematic analysis approach, the process of data analysis began with careful transcription of the interview data, reading the transcriptions and listening to the recorded interviews if clarifications were needed. Interpretation and reporting of the data was based on the understanding of participants' responses established during the interview sessions. The school context was also taken into consideration when reporting the data.

One of the research questions involved exploring the students' understanding of the terms used in Snyder's hope theory, namely hope, goal, pathway thinking (referred to plan in this research) and agency thinking (referred to motivation in this research). Thus, the themes generated from relevant responses were based on the terms used in this study. However, the initial codes were generated from the students' responses rather than from prior knowledge of Snyder's hope theory. Table 5 illustrates Braun and Clarke's six steps to thematic analysis and the approaches used in each step.

Table 5
Braun and Clarke's Six Steps to Thematic Analysis and Approaches Used

Steps	Approaches Used
Step 1: Being familiarised with the data	Clarifying the participants' views during the interview, transcribing the interviews, listening and referring back to the audio-recorded interviews as needed, reading the transcripts several times and referring back to them as needed.
Step 2: Generate initial codes	Initial codes extracted from the data based on the understanding of participants' responses established during the interview sessions. See Appendix K for an example of the initial codes.
Step 3: Search for 'candidate themes' or 'subthemes'	Initial codes were grouped to form some initial themes. Some of these initial themes grouped together to form subthemes. Transcripts were also referred whenever further clarifications required.
Step 4: Review themes	Before generating the overarching themes, the subthemes grouped were reviewed again for coherence and distinctiveness.
Step 5: Define and name themes	Collated themes were named, ensuring the 'essence' was described and clear.
Step 6: Produce the report	Writing up the identified themes, including interpretation of the data and the school context as presented in Chapter 4.

Due to the lack of discussion amongst the students in Phase 1: Session 3 regarding how a Hope programme might be applied, it was unclear if the responses from the students were a result of informed choices or of their tendency to agree on the items presented. Thus, the responses collected from this session were treated with great caution, and only those that were highlighted by the teachers and/or parents in Phase 2 were taken into consideration for analysis.

In order to ensure that the interpreted data was not simply based on prior knowledge, the initial codes were reviewed by a Year 3 trainee EP. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion. For instance, one of the students' responses of "taking a step back" when planning was initially interpreted as simply "figuring out the right way to move forward", but it was noted by the trainee EP that it involved "reflection". This suggestion was accepted.

Due to the limited number of participants recruited for each group of students, parents and teachers, a theme was defined as a concept or view that was raised by two or more individual participants, or an idea or suggestion that was given considerable attention by one participant. The coding system and themes were reviewed by research supervisors to enhance its transparency and trustworthiness.

3.4 LIMITATIONS

A number of limitations that arose were due chiefly to the underlying theoretical perspective of the present study, i.e. Snyder's hope theory (1994). For instance, due to the novelty and flexibility of the model of the Hope programme introduced, the adaptations required for a Hope programme to be made constructive and effective to young people with learning difficulties were uncertain. This led the research to use the interpretivist approach to explore the views of the participants with regard to the relevance and application of the Hope programme and hence, as discussed earlier, restricted the generalisation of the findings due to its non-numerical nature and small sample size. However, playing its role as a preliminary study to inform future research in this area, the use of the interpretivist approach was deemed appropriate and ideal to illuminate practitioners' understanding of how a Hope programme could be applied into a similar setting as informed by the young people themselves, as well as their teachers and parents.

The complexity of the terms and theoretical perspective used by Snyder, which can make high demands on young people's cognitive and linguistic skill, has also resulted in the use of a focus-group interview with the students. This led the group dynamic to become a significant issue. Although an icebreaker activity was introduced in the beginning of the first session and the students were selected based on their capacity to work in groups, a poor group dynamic still developed in Session 3 of Phase 1 due to a student developing intense anxiety, which affected the students' overall interaction and engagement. This incident was unexpected and impacted the findings of the

study, requiring that the focus of Session 4, which initially aimed to review the findings of Phase 1 with the students to ensure their responses were accurately interpreted, had to be redirected to further explore the students' views with regard to the application of a Hope programme.

Although this unexpected incident might mean that an additional session should be added to review the findings with the students, this was, however, restricted by the limited timeframe allowed for this research as well as interference from school events. Nevertheless, a number of appropriate measures were taken to alleviate the negative impact this incident could have on the research. This included (a) using interpretation and clarification questions, as outlined under Methods, to ensure the students' responses were interpreted accurately during each interview session; (b) reviewing key messages in each session from the students' responses from previous sessions to ensure their responses were accurately received; (c) using anonymised direct quotes when presenting the students' responses to the teachers and parents in Phase 2 to avoid the possible presentation of misleading information resulting from bias due to prior knowledge.

The time constraint has also prohibited presenting the findings reported from the teachers and parents' responses, before submitting the thesis. This might have an impact on the trustworthiness of the research findings. However, the awareness of this had led to the use of interpretation and clarification questions during the interview sessions with the teachers and parents to ensure their responses were clearly understood and accurately interpreted.

Additionally, in order to enhance the transparency and trustworthiness of this research, a trainee EP and both research supervisors were invited to review the coding of the transcripts, as well as the extracted themes and subthemes.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research was conducted in accordance with the British Psychological Society and Health and Care Professions Council ethics codes. This approach included but was not limited to:

- Seeking parental consent for the participation of children under the age of 16 and/or lacking decision-making capacity to ensure informed consent was given.
- Using simple language to ensure informed choices were made by the participants.
- Providing opportunities to clarify any questions or concerns to ensure participants fully understood the research purpose and the process involved.
- Clarifying the participants' rights to withdraw from the research, as well as to decline to answer questions.
- Clarifying participants' anonymity when reporting findings to ensure they could not be identified, unless they wished to be.
- Ensuring participants' understanding of the secure storage of data in which all data, including the audio recording, was stored in a personal device that only the researcher could access. The audio recording was also deleted once participants' responses were fully transcribed.

A feedback session will also be organised with all participants after the completion of the research project. This research was approved by the UCL Institute of Education ethics review board.

3.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Although qualitative research does not seek to generalise research findings in the same manner as quantitative research, the trustworthiness of qualitative research appeared to be as significant as the credibility and reliability of quantitative research. Reflexivity, defined as researchers' self-evaluation in the research process, is of vital importance when establishing the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Berger, 2015). Using the interpretivism philosophical approach required understanding that the researcher's personal and professional knowledge could have an impact on the data collection and analysis, particularly prior familiarity with the Hope theory and Hope programmes. Reflecting upon the potential of this impact due to my subjectivity, a number of strategies were used to enhance the trustworthiness of this research.

For instance, research supervision sessions were held throughout the study to help reflect on my judgments, biases and interpretations, and to help maintaining a balanced perspective by minimising the possible impact resulting from my subjectivity. Interpretative and clarification questions (see Methods) were also used throughout the various interview sessions to establish shared understanding with the participants and to ensure that the

data collected was a true reflection of the participants' views. As previously mentioned, in order to reduce biases resulting from my prior knowledge and subjectivity, a trainee EP was also invited to review the initial codes generated; both the codes and themes were also reviewed by supervisors to ensure an agreement was attained.

Using a case study approach can limit the generalisation of research findings. However, this study aimed to present findings to inform future development, and perhaps validation, of a Hope programme tailored to the needs of young people from an MLD special school. This means that the study findings may be relevant for other schools with a similar profile and demographic background. Therefore, instead of focusing on generalisation, the transparency and trustworthiness of this research appeared more significant. This was achieved by listing the methodology in great detail in order to facilitate future replication of similar research.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In response to the research questions, this chapter is divided into the following sections:

- 1 The young people's (or students') understanding of the terms used in the principles of Snyder's hope theory, namely hope, goal, pathway thinking (refers to plan here) and agency thinking (refers to motivation here).
- 2 The relevance and significance of using a Hope programme with young people of the school, as perceived by the young people themselves, their teachers and their parents.
- 3 The application of a Hope programme in the school setting, as perceived by these young people, their teachers and their parents.

Please see Appendix L for the conceptual map illustrating the themes and subthemes identified from the students' responses for each research area.

4.1 STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERMS USED

Four overarching themes were identified from the students' responses. These themes were: (a) Understandings of Hope; (b) Understandings of Goal; (c) Understandings of Plan; and (d) Understandings of Motivation.

Understandings of Hope

The students were asked about the meaning of hope in two sessions. Their understanding of the meaning of hope was explored in the first session, and ways they would explain the meaning of hope to their friends was covered in the fourth session. From the students' perspectives, the term hope was related to a number of concepts (or subthemes), including belief, being future-oriented, being persistent, and positive emotions.

To the students, hope appeared to be a term strongly associated with 'belief'. For instance, to Amy, hope was related to believing in oneself.

"Hope means be confident in yourself..."

To Ben, hope also means believing in one's capacity to achieve a goal.

"[Hope means] Believe that you can accomplish something."

Similar to Ben, the idea of believing in one's capacity to achieve a goal, as well as one's goal, was also highlighted by Cat.

"It means keep on believing in what you want to do and believe that you can do it."

Comparable ideas of believing in one's capacity to achieve a goal were also elaborated by Dan and Ben, using the concept of 'future'. For instance, Dan's explanation highlighted one's views about the future.

"I write... to XX [a friend]... I write hope means being positive about the future and believe that one day you can get what you want."

Ben, on the other hand, elaborated by highlighting the importance of having a clear future goal and being persistent, an explanation that resembled Snyder's hope theory.

"I write it to XX [a friend], I write... hope means you need to know what you need to do in future, be confident that you can do it, and not to give up on it."

To Ben and Cat, the term hope was also associated with positive feelings. In particular, Cat's responses indicated that having hope and being hopeful brought about positive emotions:

"[hope means] happiness..... because it makes me feel good."

In summary, the students' understanding of the term hope resembled Snyder's hope concept (1994) in a number of ways, such as its association with 'future' and its relevance to one's cognition and emotion. Cognitively, hope resembled a belief, which the students extended to various areas, including the self and the attainability of a goal; hope was also associated with being clear about one's goal. Emotionally, to the students, being hopeful could trigger a sense of positivity, whether it is towards the future or an emotion developed within oneself. Additionally, the students' association of hope and persistence is also congruent with the concept of agency thinking of Snyder's hope theory.

Understandings of 'Goal'

This theme refers to the meaning of the term 'goal' for the students. The students' understandings of this term were explored in Sessions 1, 2 and 4. During the first session, the students were invited to explain the meaning of the term goal, and subsequently asked to identify a future goal. In the second session, they were invited to share a goal that they had achieved in the past. In Session 4, the students were invited to take on the role of a facilitator and to explain the meaning of goal to a friend from the school. From the students' perspectives, the term goal was associated with: achievement, personal desire or wish, being flexible in its nature, career, positive sense of self and life, leisure activities, confidence, being a target, being persistent, and being a process.

To the students, a goal was often associated with an achievement. When Dan was asked to share a goal that he had met in the past, he highlighted one of his achievements.

"I won the Jack Petchey which is a high achievement not many people have..... It's a high achievement, you get it for great ideas, and you get the medal, and it's for outstanding behaviour and all that."

In addition to achievement, the students' understanding of the term goal also appeared to be related to a wish or desire to achieve. For example, Amy stated concisely that a goal was:

"When you win something....."

And Ben indicated that a goal was:

“Something you want to achieve.”

This concept of goal as a personal desire or wish was also identified in Cat’s response, whose meaning of goal was flexible in its nature, without a definite measure of what constituted a goal as it was primarily based on one’s wish or desire.

“A goal means anything... like... if you want a job, if you want a dream job, it can... it can be a goal [as long as you want it]”

This flexible nature of goal, resulted from personal desire and wish, was also highlighted by Dan when invited to share his understanding of the term.

“Do whatever you want in life.....like get whatever job you want... that’s a goal.”

It should be noted that the definition of ‘goal’ from both Cat and Dan was also career-focused, which was a major subtheme identified from the students’ responses when they were asked to look to the future. For instance,

“My goal is to have a weekend job, and have my own job as a nursery nurse in a hospital.” (Amy)

“I wrote here my goal is to be a football coach.” (Ben)

Apart from establishing a career, to Ben, a future goal also meant developing a positive sense of self and life.

“[My goal is to] Be positive, and have a happy life, [have] motivation and family, being a friend of someone who has you back at all times..... [to have] successful mind-thinking.”

On the other hand, Cat noted the importance of goals related both to a potential career and leisure activities.

“My goal is to be a film-maker, and then playing computer games.”

The students’ definition of goal appeared to coincide with their understanding of hope. When they were invited to take the perspective of a facilitator to explain their understanding of the term to a friend, in addition to relating goal to a target, the concept of having confidence (or ‘believing’ as stated under ‘hope’) in one’s capacity to achieve a goal and to be persistent, was also communicated.

“..... a goal is to have an objective, and confidence in yourself that... you can do what you want to do.” (Ben)

“..... goal means to do something you have to keep working towards and never give up.” (Dan)

To Amy, a goal was also perceived as a process, instead of an outcome as described by other students, and being confident in oneself was an important component in the goal-attaining process:

“It [a goal] means achieving an accomplishment with confidence.”

There was evidence of overlapping concepts between the terms goal and hope. This suggested that, to the students, these two terms might not be perceived as distinct from one another, as conveyed in Snyder’s hope theory. However, similar to Snyder’s hope theory (1994), to the students, a goal should be based on personal desire and aspiration. Perhaps due to the school

curriculum that focuses on vocational development, to the students, the term goal also appeared to associate strongly with their 'career'.

Understandings of 'Plan'

This theme refers to the meaning of the term 'plan' according to the students. The students' understandings of the term plan were explored in Sessions 1, 2 and 4. In Session 1, the students were invited to define the term plan and were later asked to draw a plan for their future goals. In Session 2, they were invited to share how they had planned to achieve a previous goal. In Session 4, they were asked to explain the meaning of plan to a friend from the school. The subthemes (or concepts) identified were: being goal-oriented, being action-based, consisting of various tasks/steps, involving proactive learning, and being academically-based.

In general, the relationship between the terms 'plan', 'goal' and 'action' was perceived as inseparable to the students, for whom a plan was often goal-oriented, and action-based. For instance,

"Plan means that you plan something you want to do... at the time you want to do something" (Ben)

"It means you organise what you want to do in your life." (Amy)

As far as being goal-oriented and action-based, to Cat, a plan served as a guideline to reach her goal:

"A plan to me means like... you've gotta plan something for your future goals... what you want to get in the future, you plan it and then you do it, and just follow it."

As part of the concepts of being goal-oriented and action-based, the responses from Dan and Cat with regard to their understandings of 'plan' also resembled the journey of exploring and identifying the best way to move forward to reach their goals. For instance, Dan's responses about plan resembled a journey of trial and error in which one needed to first take action before being able to assess the appropriateness of a plan, and to rectify it.

"[Plan means] No matter what you want to be, just do it..... And it doesn't matter if it is wrong, or if you make a mistake, you can always change it (the plan)....."

To Cat, reflection was also necessary when trying to figure out the next steps to reach a goal.

"When you [want to] achieve a goal, you gonna take a step back, you gonna think about what you gonna do."

Most students showed the capacity to develop plans that were in line with their goals. The developed plans often consisted of various tasks/steps. For instance, when drawing out a future plan for her goal as a nursery nurse, Amy shared her plan as follows:

"My plan is to work hard in life, and maybe be a TA to help out with other kids."

A similar idea was also proposed by Dan, when he was sharing how he had planned to achieve his goal of learning to play piano last year. This response also demonstrated that the concept of plan involved the need to proactively engage in learning, such as taking the initiative to ask for adult support, and learning and practising new skills.

“..... I asked my mum to get me a piano teacher, and he taught me how to [play]. He taught me that what you need to do is first you need to practise your fingers on the scales, using your thumbs and your middle and little fingers, to practise.....”

However, it was apparent that not all students were able to make clear and distinct plans that were relevant to their goals. For instance, although Cat gave a good explanation of what a plan meant to her (see above) when sharing how she planned to achieve her future goal as a film-maker, her plan was more academically-based with an aim of defending her goal (goal-oriented), which appeared relatively generic and less concrete, compared to others.

“My plan for my goal is to do well in school or college, and my second plan is to not let anyone to take my goal or dream away.”

In summary, to the students, the terms plan and goal are strongly related to each other, and in order to achieve a goal, a plan should be action-focused. Similar to Snyder's hope theory, along with action-planning for one's goal, a plan also resembled problem-solving, in which some of the students showed awareness of the possibility of making inappropriate plans and therefore, the importance of trial and error as well as reflection to help one identify the best way to move forward. However, in order for the students to successfully develop a clear and concrete plan to achieve a goal, some might require additional support.

Understandings of Motivation

This theme refers to the students' understanding of the term 'motivation'. The students were invited to discuss the term motivation in two different sessions, Sessions 1 and 4. In Session 1, they were asked to explain the term motivation; in Session 4, they were given the opportunity to explain the term to a friend from the school. The students were also asked in Session 4 to imagine how they would support a friend to achieve a goal. They indicated motivating friends was key; however, instead of providing strategies or sharing appropriate approaches their friends might need, most of the students' responses contained the characteristics of motivation. Thus, although the question aimed to elicit responses in relation to the application of Hope theory to students from the school, due to the nature of the students' responses, most of them were categorised as the students' understandings of motivation instead. The concepts identified as associated with the term 'motivation' were: self-management, bringing positive outcomes, being essential for reaching one's goal, having confidence to achieve a goal, achievement, and positive sense of self.

When asked to explain the term motivation, Ben provided a very comprehensive explanation, which overlapped with the responses of other students. One of the major concepts expressed was having good self-management skills, such as demonstrating positive attitudes by reflecting upon and remaining focused on one's goals and being committed to one's plans. To Ben, this could eventually bring positive outcomes, such as promoting a positive sense of self and achieving one's goal. These outcomes,

to him, represented success and appeared to be the 'motivator' of self-motivation.

"[Motivation means] You gonna be strict to yourself... [how?] by thinking about what you need to achieve, what goals that need to be done. So you have gotta do that, do what you gotta do, then get into college... and then when you think about it, what you did, you will be proud of yourself..... So for example, if you was a footballer..... this is what people say to you, they say, to motivate yourself, you have to persuade yourself, and to become what you want to become, and you will be successful. Sometimes you won't be successful, but then you need to think about what you need to do. If you don't think about it, you are not going to get nowhere. You just need to be hard a bit to yourself"

As evident in the quote above, Ben also showed understanding that one might encounter failure along the journey of reaching one's goals. With this understanding, to Ben, self-management also meant persevering through challenges and struggles, by keeping a positive mindset, including normalising and forgiving oneself for making mistakes along the journey.

"Sometimes there can be struggles, and sometimes... they can't [achieve the goal]..... [because] You made the bad choices, and you can make bad choices, and [but] you need to be positive as well, to yourself... even there are struggles, just keep pushing yourself..... don't be negative."

As highlighted by Ben, motivation was essential for one to achieve a goal:

"I think the key thing to achieve the goal is... about the motivation."

Embedded within the concept of self-management, the idea of being persistent and overcoming challenges was also expressed by Dan. Dan included the idea of emotional management in his explanation.

".....it is scary in the big wide world, you will come across a lot of scary things but keep calm..... and just go for it."

The students' understanding of 'motivation' appeared to overlap with their understanding of other Snyder's hope terms. For instance, Cat's understanding of motivation was similar to one of the concepts identified from the students' responses about hope, which was the idea of believing in one's capacity to achieve a goal.

"..... always believe in yourself that you can achieve your goal."

Amy's understanding of motivation also overlapped with some of the concepts of goal discussed earlier. She associated the term 'motivation' with achievement and a positive sense of self. Although this concept of motivation was similar to the idea held by Ben, in which Ben's responses were categorised under the concept (or subtheme) of bringing positive outcomes, different perspectives were taken when explaining the term, and therefore different subthemes were derived from their responses. To Ben, achievement and a positive sense of self were the outcomes that 'motivation' would bring. However, to Amy, achievement and a positive sense of self appeared equivalent to the definition of motivation.

"[Motivation means] accomplishment, be strong, and be assertive in all aspects of life."

In summary, the students' understanding of the term motivation appeared to overlap with their understandings of other terms, particularly hope and goal. Once again, findings from the students' understandings of the terms used to explain the principles of Snyder's hope theory (1994) suggested that although similar to Snyder's concept that the terms were interrelated with each other,

the definitions of these terms were not as distinguishable from each other as explained in the theory itself.

4.2 THE RELEVANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF A HOPE PROGRAMME

All participants were invited to share their views with regard to the relevance and significance of using a Hope programme with students from the school.

4.2.1 Students' Perspectives

Two overarching themes were derived from the students' responses. The themes were: (a) 'goal' as a prevalently used term; and (b) the value of using a Hope programme.

'Goal' as a prevalently used term

This theme refers to the familiarity of the term goal to the students, with sharing future goals with friends as its subtheme. When trying to explain the term goal to a friend, Ben and Dan indicated that they often used this term with friends when talking about the future. This manifested in goal, as one of the main components of Snyder's hope theory (1994), being a common language used within the school, and having and setting a goal being one of the primary agendas at this stage of their life, which appeared significant and highly relevant to them.

"We [Ben and a friend] do that [talk about goals] when we talk about what we want to do in future." (Ben)

"Yea, like I always talk to XX [a friend] about what we want to do when we get older." (Dan)

The value of using a Hope programme

This theme was derived from the students' perspectives of the significance of using a Hope programme, developed with the three major components of Snyder's hope theory: goal, pathway thinking and agency thinking. Two subthemes were identified: (1) clarifying one's goal; (2) creating positive outcomes.

Dan particularly appreciated the opportunities provided to share, which he felt helped to clarify his goal. This was also one of the approaches embedded within a Hope programme, suggesting the value of using a Hope programme with the students.

"I think it's important to talk about our goals..... so that we know what we want to do"

When the students were asked about how being able to make plans (pathway thinking) and to motivate oneself (agency thinking) would make them feel, they cited the positive outcomes they thought it would bring, including the possibility of achieving a goal and developing a more positive sense of self and emotions, which to them was due to the perceived attainability of a goal.

For instance, Dan expressed that it would make him feel

"Impressed... happy..... because I've worked that hard, and all the hard work I know will finally pay off."

Ben also highlighted the significance of achieving a goal in bringing about a more positive sense of self.

"[So you think being able to make plans and to motivate yourself will help you reach your goal and bring you hope?]

Yea, cause if it is something you wanna do, you don't want to put yourself down, you need to be proud about yourself."

In summary, to the students, Snyder's hope theory, with its emphasis on the interaction of the three components of goal, pathway thinking and agency thinking in supporting hopeful thinking in individuals, was demonstrated in the students' responses in which they emphasised the significance of being able to make plans (pathway) and self-motivate (agency) in visualising the attainability of a goal. Additionally, developing a more positive sense of self had been a concept mentioned repeatedly by the students, including in relation to their understandings of the terms goal and motivation, suggesting it to be a significant personal development for the students. According to the students, using a Hope programme appeared to play a role in supporting that development. Furthermore, the term goal appeared to resonate better with the students, by that it sounded more familiar to them and had been used in their everyday language more than other terms.

4.2.2 Teachers' Perspectives

When the teachers were invited to share the challenges they had met when applying the person-centred approach in school, although this was not the main objective of the questions posed, responses conveyed interest in raising the students' level of hope. One overarching theme was identified: value of cultivating hope in students.

Value of cultivating hope in students

This theme referred to the significance of cultivating hope in students of the school, which included the subthemes of supporting students experiencing transition or are leaving school, and supporting students' identification of goals.

The teachers were concerned about the idea of transition and leaving school, which was noted to be perceived by their students as rather negative.

According to the teachers, this was a significant change for some of their students. Due to the lack of control over their future, some students could perceive the idea of transition and leaving school as an obstacle or an undesirable change. Therefore, the teachers wished to cultivate a sense of positivity within the students with regard to their views about their future and leaving school, and were exploring strategies to support the students to be more hopeful about the transition. For instance, Mr Eric indicated that:

“.....their [most students'] views about their future and education, and moving on and transition, is something that they are not really in control of, it's just something that happens to them..... [so support them by] giving them encouragement and hope..... I mean just try to 'cushion'..... sometimes I think we could give more..... to have a proper dedicated few sessions about changes..... [because] it's like at the moment..... they kind of think they are heading to a brick wall so we have to ease transition, make it a little more okay or transparent so that they think they can drive through, if we can.”

They saw the potential benefit of adding the concept of Hope Theory into the school curriculum, to help illuminate and support Year 11 students' understanding of transition. For instance, Mr Eric indicated that:

“..... it would be nice to incorporate some of your ideas [raising hope] into what we are doing, so that 'Philosophy for Children' that I think

possibly, will be a very great valuation to have a 'Philosophy for Children' session for our year 11 students especially to look into the future, it could be the word 'hope' the word 'future' or an image that tells them about 'transition', 'change' or 'big change'... getting them to face it, getting them to arrive at the idea of 'transition' as well....."

This suggestion of Mr Eric was in line with Ms Faye's views, who was working closely with the sixth formers of the school and had a role in preparing them for transition. Ms Faye was concerned about the changes in the students' social life as they moved on, and she was exploring strategies with a colleague to help support students in a successful transition. She was positive about Mr Eric's idea of raising hope in students experiencing transition by focusing on the students' understanding of leaving school and future.

"That's absolutely brilliant [Mr Eric's idea]! Because we do have somebody that is leaving in a couple of weeks and in a particular class. A teacher and I were talking, ok we need to go and do some transition stuff with her..... and somehow build that in into our day to day discussion and how we can do that. Because there is going to be a big change for the children that she is with, but I think Mr Eric makes an excellent point about it should be part of the sixth form, it will be really interesting, definitely, yea."

One of the challenges the teachers expressed in using the person-centred approach with their students was the difficulties of helping students to identify a realistic and reachable future goal to support their transition (leaving school). Mr Eric indicated the significance of cultivating hope in these students, as an approach to empower them, whilst redirecting them to a more accessible goal.

"[So identifying a realistic goal, can be challenging for the students?]

Yea, you know we need to give hope to these pupils as well...so that they feel they can it... but maybe in a different [way]..."

In summary, responses from the teachers suggested that students from the school required support to develop a more positive (or 'hopeful') view about their future. This indicates the relevance and significance of 'raising hope' in students of the school.

4.2.3 Parents' Perspectives

When the parents were invited to share their views regarding the relevance and significance of using a Hope programme with their child, two overarching themes were derived: (1) value of a Hope programme; and (2) concern towards the effectiveness of a Hope programme.

Value of a Hope programme

This theme refers to the significance of having the students participate in a programme developed using Snyder's hope theory. The subthemes identified were: supporting personal development, serving as an additional learning experience, the significance of having and achieving a goal, and the benefits of the strengths-based approach.

After being presented with Snyder's hope theory and the 'hope-approaches' identified from the students' responses, the parents' opinions were solicited. Most parents were positive about the idea of using a Hope programme with the students as well as the proposed 'hope-approaches', and recognised its potential in supporting the students' personal development. For instance, Amy's mother expressed that

“..... it's very very very good..... because this programme, this Hope [programme] in this school has to develop the motivation, it has to

develop self-esteem..... [it's] useful [to Amy]... Because that's giving her more confidence. And giving her more strengths and ability..."

Ben's mother indicated that the programme could serve as an additional learning experience for Ben, as Ben had previously had only her as a learning model, which she thought was restrictive and not necessarily always beneficial to Ben. Ben's mother specifically noted the value of a Hope programme in helping Ben to set and reach a goal, and to develop a more positive sense of self. Ben's mother thought that it was important for Ben to have and be able to achieve goals, as, in her opinion, it could enhance Ben's mental health, self-motivation and positive outlook about his future:

"..... it will set things in motion for him and make him understand how he has to be..... because he [Ben] has only ever watched me and I think he's picked up a lot of that [negative mindset] and he is going a little bit depression at the moment..... I don't want him to turn out like me... I want him to have goals and I want him to be able to do them..... because I find that he... he lacks motivation..... [and] he needs to think more positively..... he doesn't think positive about his future..... So I think it's a good thing... I do believe it's a good thing....."

Although Dan's mother was not particularly positive about the identified 'hope-approaches' and noted that they were all common approaches that they had been using at home, she agreed with the principle of using a strengths-based approach, which emphasised the positive aspects of the students, in keeping Dan motivated and providing him with a sense of competence.

"It's all [the hope-approaches] common sense..... I think with these kids you have to be positive, if you are negative you don't... it doesn't work... it just grinds to halt, so you have to be even over positive..... you have to enhance everything for him and to tell him that he can do it eventually, you know, maybe not as quick as the others, but he will still get that eventually....."

Concern towards the effectiveness of a Hope programme

A number of concerns about factors influencing the effectiveness of a Hope programme were particularly raised by Ben's mother. This includes her concern over the impact of parental influence and whether the proposed Hope programme was 'timely' enough to serve its purpose. Although Ben's mother was positive about the idea of using a Hope programme with Ben, she was concerned about the negative role model she thought she had been for Ben, which could affect Ben's response towards a Hope programme.

"It's all good, [but] I don't know how he [Ben] is going to cope with it cause, he watched me in the last... nearly 18 years obviously and nothing like that has ever worked for me so..."

Ben's mother also questioned if Ben would benefit from a Hope programme at this age, after being exposed to various unpleasant past experiences, which she thought could possibly interfere with Ben's response to the programme. She recommended this to be included as part of an early intervention programme, for it to be constructive.

"Start it early with him, obviously is gonna help him, cause he has faced a lot of not, not positive stuff, that's why I think he would find it difficult [to engage]....."

In summary, the parents were generally positive about using a Hope programme with the students and thought that it could support the students' development in a variety of areas, including personal development, such as self-motivation, and a sense of positivity, whether towards themselves or about the future. However, one parent also suggested the significance of considering systemic factors and past experiences as a covariate that might

interfere with the effectiveness of a Hope programme, and hence recommended it being considered as an early intervention programme.

4.3 APPLYING HOPE THEORY IN PRACTICE

This section focuses on all participants' responses concerning how a Hope programme should be tailored to students of the school. In particular, the students' responses regarding how they had planned and what had been useful to help them achieve a future and previous goal, as well as strategies for how their named friend could be supported to achieve a goal, were included in this section.

As for the teachers and parents, the students' proposed 'hope-approaches' were presented to them to obtain their views. This included the students' responses with regard to the areas indicated above, as well as their identification of useful 'hope-approaches' in Session 3 of Phase 1 (see Methodology chapter). However, due to the lack of descriptive data collected from the session, only approaches that were highlighted by the teachers and parents were discussed and presented in their respective sections. Table 7 in Appendix H contains the complete list of 'hope-approaches' proposed to the teachers, which was the same as for the parents.

4.3.1 Students' Perspectives

One overarching theme was identified from the students' responses, which was engagement.

Engagement

This refers to the factors that might either enhance or hinder the students' engagement with the programme, and hence suggested its significance to be considered when using a Hope programme with the students. Three subthemes were identified: opportunities to engage with adults, collaborative working with friends, and emotion management.

Responses from the students suggested the significance of being provided with the opportunities to work with adults and have access to their support as an approach to motivate the students themselves and to enhance their engagement with achieving goals. This includes helping them to set a goal and plan by identifying their areas of strength, providing encouragement and empowering self-confidence to keep them motivated and remain positive, and serving as a role model by sharing their experiences and skills so that the students were aware of what to do and how to achieve a goal. For instance, when Ben was sharing his plan to reach his goal as a football coach for children, he described the support he received from his football coach as follows, sharing how it inspired and motivated him:

"I want to be a football coach for kids, in the industry of coaching..... So when I met XX, he is a coach here. And he said to me that you will be one of the great people to be a coach, and that have inspired me. I know I'm actually loving it, I've done a few coaching with him, and I'm watching how people play, it makes me want to do it just straightaway, just get out there, and then he just talks to my mum and says that "well, he needs to have this experience, he needs to do his coaching with me" and I just did with him. And he said I'm really good at it. That's making me want to do it even more. That's what I want to be."

Having the opportunities to work collaboratively with close friends was also identified as important to support the students' engagement in making plans for their goal. When asked to explain the meaning of plan to a friend, Ben used an example of how he and his friend had shared skills and assigned jobs based on each other's competency to make plans for a goal that they would like to achieve in future. His response described how mutual understanding between friends facilitated their working relationship, and hence supported their planning for a goal.

"So I wrote down how me and XX [a friend] have planned to start recording music and writing songs..... we will just get our papers out and write about the plans. Like he wants to be a musician, and I will be able to help him to, you know, write the songs, the rhythms and lyrics, and I'm teaching him how to. So we've got our own jobs, I will just be a helping hand, help him to write the songs."

Responses from the students also suggested the significance of managing personal emotions (emotional management), when trying to achieve a goal and engage in a Hope programme. For instance, when invited to share their ideas of how to support a friend to reach a goal, Ben described the significance of helping his friend to effectively manage his emotions. Ben indicated that his friend had emotional regulation difficulties, meaning his engagement with a task was dependent on his emotions.

"I would... basically just what I need to do to help him stay calm. Because he might get angry a few times..... when he is angry he would just run away, and no one can stop him."

When asked about what might interest their friends to participate in a Hope programme, Ben offered similar responses:

“It depends on how they feel, like XX [a friend] it depends a lot on his mood. He can concentrate when he is in a good mood but when he is not, he just won’t do it.”

When asked about what might not interest their friends to join this programme, Ben’s response was, again, associated with emotional control and suggested that the setting of the programme was important as his friend might be anxious in places that were overcrowded, which could have an impact on his engagement.

“..... like for XX [a friend], when people are around him, too close, he doesn’t feel comfortable, and he will move away. And when it is crowded, he doesn’t like crowded rooms..... he will get sweaty and nervous. And it will be hard to open his mouth.”

A similar response was also revealed by Dan.

“Yea, I don’t really like small space.”

Apart from the setting, Ben also conveyed the significance of working with friends in helping one to manage personal emotions. When asked about what might interest his friend to join a Hope programme, Ben’s responses featured the potential of the programme in helping one to reach a goal by supporting their emotional management skills. When prompted, he noted that working with friends was one of the valuable approaches used.

“.....I think it will help him reach his goal, and feel calmer when he is angry and want to give up on his goal.....

[What is that about the programme that will make him feel calmer?]

I think just the programme makes him feel relaxed, and make him feel he is like... he is at home, because he is with us.”

Dan, on the other hand, noted the significance of normalising struggles or challenges as a means of comforting his friend. When asked about how to help a friend who was having difficulties progressing towards a goal, Dan responded:

“..... go up to him and tell him that it is okay, a lot of people struggle but it's okay.”

In summary, the students' responses suggested the significance of working with someone familiar, such as adults at school and friends, to support their engagement in the goal-attainment journey. The students' responses also support the importance of including emotional management strategies in this Hope programme tailored to students of this school, in which the setting and opportunities to work with close friends were highlighted as helpful elements.

4.3.2 Teachers' Perspectives

In order to better engage the teachers, they were invited to first share the challenges of using the person-centred approach with their students. However, perhaps due to the teachers' understanding of the purpose of the research prior to the focus-group interview, although the questions posed did not initially aim to elicit the teachers' perspectives with regard to the application of the Hope programme, responses provided were highly relevant to its application and therefore were included in the analysis of this section. The teachers were then invited to share their views about the students' suggested 'hope-approaches'.

The themes generated from the teachers' responses were (a) positive views about the students' suggested 'hope-approaches', (b) accessibility for less able students, (c) group sharing, (d) accessibility for students requiring emotional support, (e) challenges and strategies for students with difficulties setting a goal, and (f) using the person-centred approach.

Positive views about the students' suggested 'hope-approaches'

This theme refers to the teachers' agreement with the application of a Hope programme suggested by the students. In general, Mr Eric was impressed with the comprehensiveness and appropriateness of the suggested 'hope-approaches':

"Yea... I think this is a very good guideline and some good ideas as well. This could basically be a plan, on its own... absolutely.....

[Is there anything that has surprised you?]

I don't... Nothing stands out particularly, it's just good to be reminded of the good practice, you know, all of these is good practice, there is nothing here that I think is wrong, everything is correct as far as I can see."

Although Mr Eric implied having concerns about the practicality of the proposed 'hope-approaches' for students who were less able, he noted its flexibility, which allowed it to be adapted for these students.

"Children in Key Stage 4 and some Key Stage 5 who are more vocal, they are more able to have discussion, it lends itself out to those students. The students that we've got, coming up from Key Stage 3 are more SLD [severe learning difficulties]... but this can be adapted..... So it has to be tailored, has to be tailored but there are some great ideas."

When explaining the reason why he thought the suggested approaches were good practice, Mr Eric highlighted how the use of visual support was congruent with the teachers' practices when working with students in the school.

“Because you’ve got in here, images, drawings, pictures, videos so all those visuals, you know we need, we work with all of those, obviously, in everything that we do.”

He was also particularly positive about the suggestion of inviting the students to bring in items that reminded them of how they achieved a goal in the past, which he thought would create a programme that felt more relevant to the students, hence enhancing the students' interest and engagement.

“..... I love the idea of make them bringing in photographs and things that they have achieved in the past, and even things like if they have some have them might have certificates, some of them will have.. whatever they’ve got, anything, trophies... so yea, person-centred, interesting.....”

Accessibility for less able students

This theme refers to the teachers' concerns about the accessibility of the proposed 'hope-approaches' for students who presented with higher cognitive and linguistic needs and some additional strategies suggested by the teachers.

When expressing his concerns over the practicality of the suggested 'hope-approaches' for students with more severe learning difficulties and those who were less vocal, although specific examples were not provided, Mr Eric

suggested including more activities when using this programme with students who were less able to reinforce their engagement.

“So I think group talking, too much talking, could not necessary work with the SLD children, and the less able children, so more activities would work with these children.”

Due to the varying language skills displayed by their students, Ms Faye also highlighted the significance being extra cautious when communicating with the students. She indicated that in order for a programme to be made accessible and to engage students of all language levels, the clarity of the language used should be taken into consideration. Using simple language to reinforce understanding amongst the students was recommended.

“..... and I was about to say that being clear, is so important for the students in this school..... It's so important because some people are very literal but some are not, the language has to be very basic, clear, because otherwise you set up confusion.....”

Mr Eric also highlighted the importance of ensuring the students' understanding of any question posed, using strategies that reinforced information processing and allowed additional processing time, such as using examples and making good use of pause and repetition. This suggestion from Mr Eric implied that the students might require additional time and sessions for a hope programme to be effective.

“..... when they answer a question, you know, you really need to ask the question and then pause...and then give them an example and then pause... and then repeat the same question... to give them time to process the question.”

Group sharing

When invited to share the challenges that they had encountered in using the person-centred approach with students of the school, Mr Eric expressed the difficulties of having their students to share in a group and highlighted the support the students might require during group-sharing. Although not specifically referring to a Hope programme, given its nature as a group-based intervention programme, this concern appeared relevant to be considered when applying a Hope programme in the school.

Mr Eric indicated that the types of question asked in a group could determine whether or not the students felt comfortable sharing their thoughts.

“..... it could be... either your questions are not interesting to them, or it could be... too personal. So they feel like “I want to say something” but maybe not in a group.”

Mr Eric also noted that students at this age might have developed a high level of self-consciousness, which could inhibit them from expressing their views in a group.

“If it is in a group situation..... especially at this age, you know, saying the right thing.. they are quite guarded maybe a little bit, sometimes that can be...”

As a result, strategies to promote a group dynamic and using adult encouragement and prompting in the beginning of a group session were deemed critical.

“If it is in a group situation, initially it can be, you know you have to give them a bit of a ‘kick’ to be able to speak up, depending on the group and the dynamic. So sometimes they need encouragement to start thinking..... initially, to really kind of... get them... get them, get them to speak...”

A rapport-building activity was also suggested as an approach to enhance the group dynamic and to encourage the students to share their views about the topics discussed. This activity was one of the recommended emotional management approaches for students, and was therefore embedded within the relevant theme, which will be presented next.

Accessibility for students requiring emotional support

This theme consisted of responses with regard to the challenges students with emotional difficulties might face, in a Hope programme, and the strategies suggested by the teachers to ameliorate these challenges.

When reviewing the 'hope-approaches' generated from the students' responses, Ms Faye highlighted the significance of taking into consideration the setting for the programme in order for it to be more accessible to students with emotional management difficulties. This also meant providing the students with personal space to practise activities that were useful to help manage their personal emotions, and to self-motivate.

"I think the idea of... the 'setting' is important too..... we have to find a spot, when you are down there, you can just pick on it, you know, stop, breathe and try to hit back into the positive thinking....."

Perhaps due to the prevalence of students demonstrating emotional difficulties in the school, Ms Faye continued to question how a programme of this kind, focusing on raising hope, cultivating positive thinking, and reaching goals, can be made available for students requiring additional support to manage their emotions. Speaking from experience, Ms Faye noted that it

could be challenging for their students, who were experiencing low self-esteem and negative self-concept, to redirect their mindset to a more positive one and to self-motivate. She indicated that this was particularly challenging for those who were anxious about the idea of transition and leaving school. Ms Faye suggested the need to include strategies to enhance the students' independent use of emotional management skills, one that could be made applicable to their life as they moved out of school.

“Because some of our students have issues with anger management, I mean that can spiral if you are feeling, your self-esteem is low and you are about to leave [the school], you are about to go to the big wide world, it will be good to have some tools, so that they can take with them, or to learn some of those, and in order to deal with some of those issues that might arise or when they are feeling [low]... very fast... how can you self-regulate, how can you come back to the centre of yourself, and focus, on your goal..... because you mentioned about the positive thinking, the problem is the spiral of ‘that’s gone wrong’ ‘I feel bad’, negative thinking and one of the pupils that we work with, can just spiral like that..... so how do we [support them].....”

In response to Ms Faye’s concerns, Mr Eric suggested incorporating a self-regulation toolkit to encourage and empower the students in using emotional management strategies in a Hope programme by giving them the option of whether or not to utilise adult support and reminding them of the self-regulation toolkit they had with them.

“Tools, they can have... give students a toolkit, like this is your toolkit, over the coming weeks..... it could be laminated words with a picture, or tools, and they can hand it over to someone who can help you, and they can choose, give them choice..... and say ‘ok, you’ve got your toolkit, if you are finding some negative unhelpful thinking, ok, would you like to be given your tools to work with?’”

Mr Eric highlighted that this could also be used as a strategy for rapport building in the beginning of a Hope programme, serving as an approach to reinforce the students' group sharing.

"I mean, yea, we could start the sessions by reviewing toolbox or toolbag and say alright, who would like to share what's in your toolbag?..... and say 'so why have you chosen that?' you know just get them to start talking....."

[for rapport building and to understand each other?]

Yea, some activities that could link them [the students] together."

Ms Faye agreed with the suggestions and emphasised that in order for the students to voluntarily practise their emotional management skills and to be able to independently apply the skills they learnt from a Hope programme to life outside of school, it was important for the toolkit to be personalised, containing a variety of activities that the students perceived as helpful.

"..... there are things like other pressure stuff that people could do, there, there are things like... tools you know can be some breathing exercise, they could be done on a nice laminated card... but there are some other tools like photographs, you know, and actually, they could actually accumulate and combine and everyone will have that bag of things that they need....."

Ms Faye also suggested that the toolkit might create a conditioning effect, in which it might remind the students of how they coped with the emotional struggles and disappointment they had experienced during the Hope programme sessions, and therefore be more able to apply similar strategies when confronted with challenges after they left school.

"They might not need it [their toolkit] once they have left [school], they might just throw it over there, but one day, they might go and find their tool bag, when they are struggling, with outcomes that are not as expected."

In addition to helping the students to manage their emotions when facing challenges and struggles, Mr Eric showed his preference for the students' suggestion of normalising their experience, as an approach to comfort them.

“..... I like the ‘comforting’ as well... it’s just letting them know ‘it’s normal’... [saying to the students] It can be frightening, it can make you feel upset, but those are normal feelings.”

Challenges and strategies for students with difficulties setting a goal

This theme refers to the challenges the teachers had faced when supporting their students to set a future goal and the strategies the school staff had put in place to facilitate this.

When sharing the challenges they had faced using the person-centred approach, perhaps due to the age of the students with whom the teachers were working, employability and future career had become a focus of the discussion. Ms Faye explained that setting a career goal that reflected the students' true wishes was challenging. Ms Faye noted that the students had not necessarily developed a clear understanding of the concept of future, which affected their capacity to think flexibly and to visualise themselves engaging in a different role in the future. Therefore, the career goal that they had set was not always consistent, and might not be a true reflection of the industry about which they felt most passionate.

“I think what it is about these children is the idea of ‘future’, is quite abstract... is too far away. Their mind set is mainly about... where they are at right now. And so therefore the challenge is to try and draw out some of the views of themselves [about the future]. So I’m thinking of S [a student] for instance, so “what do you want to do in future” so she has a sort of a script in her head that that is one thing, and then it became something else. And actually she finds it quite hard when thinking about the future, she will just say what’s happening right now,

and that will be the scripts she has in her head, so that could be challenging.”

Ms Faye added that due to difficulties in envisioning the degree of challenges they might face when working to achieve a goal, some students, on the other hand, could find it hard to set a goal that is realistic for their capacity. Ms Faye expressed the challenges she had faced when trying to sensibly redirect a student towards a more reachable and realistic goal.

“..... So for instance, another student that we have, he has decided to be a science teacher..... so just talking around what that would entail, and having kind of a realistic expectation really..... So when I say “let’s have a look at the qualifications you need” and “how do you feel about that?” [the students responded] “Yup, that’s fine!”, you know..... extremely stubborn. So that’s the challenge... actually..... you know if it’s not what it can be, we might need to take care of some of those... feelings...”

Although Mr Eric was in agreement with Ms Faye with regard to the challenges of setting a goal with their students, Mr Eric did not see this as a difficulty that was unique to their students. He added that, due to the lack of life experience, young people of this age would generally find setting a career goal challenging and might often not persist.

“..... something just came to my mind... for any children, mainstream even, it is hard to think about the future..... because adults we have experience and hindsight and actually the question is... should... it be the expectation for a child 15, 16... they know their career path, as it is... that I don’t think it’s feasible for everybody.”

Since setting a goal is one of the major activities of a Hope programme and responses from the students indicated that they often associated the term ‘goal’ with a future career, it is therefore crucial to take these challenges into consideration when applying a Hope programme to students of the school.

Staff from the school had instituted a number of strategies to support the students' goal setting, which could possibly be considered when formulating this type of programme in schools with a similar demographic background. For instance, Mr Eric suggested a first step of using visual support to promote students' understanding of time concepts, and later on supporting their understanding of future and setting a future goal.

“..... so what we have is from 'now' and then 'next' on Makaton, we've got for some of the children we have, to help them think about what we do now and next, like 'now' we do Maths, 'next' we do PE.”

Ms Faye also shared the approaches she took when eliciting the students' views about a future goal, including shifting the student's attention to draw her out of her 'script' about future, and later suggesting an industry that she could explore to reinforce flexible thinking.

“..... she came out with the idea of pharmaceutical [eventually], she was researching that a bit.....

[how did you help her to think about that?]

I had to change the subject, and then I had to come back again. So I draw her away, and talk about something else, and then just sort of come back in with “how about this?” [student responded] “No no” [Ms Faye prompted] “how about this, medical?”.”

Mr Eric also suggested using the curriculum delivered in school as examples to help the students start considering their career goals, and to normalise the students' change of mind about a goal as a natural part of the process.

“[to support students' setting a future goal]we could give them more general advice, we could say, well, you, in school, you know the things that you do in school, the learning that you do in school, will help you in the future, whatever you do, sort of things, and your ideas may change over the years as with lots of adults.”

As embedded within some of the teachers' responses earlier, reframing and redirecting the students to a more realistic goal was also an approach used.

For instance, Mr Eric indicated that:

“..... you would say “you can do something in that field maybe”, so it has got to be something, somewhere.”

Using the person-centred approach

In order for a Hope programme to be constructive, Mr Eric felt that placing the students at the centre of the programme was of great importance, along with requesting parents' feedback with regard to the effectiveness of the programme. This suggestion resembled the person-centred approach.

For instance, Mr Eric suggested that students' interest played the central role when engaging them in a Hope programme. Once again, formulating the programme in a way that seemed relevant to the students and including activities that they would enjoy doing were suggested as possible approaches.

“..... as long as it's interesting for them to start, and personal to them as well, it's great..... so yea, person-centred..... it's gotta be interesting to them and activities about this as well.”

When asked about the role of parents in a Hope programme, Mr Eric emphasised the significance of using a home-school approach, notifying the parents and accessing their feedback, as a way to triangulate information about the students' progress and the effectiveness of the programme.

“If a programme of this kind were set up in a school, then I'm sure parents would appreciate knowing that it was taking place... and would be happy to feedback, especially if they feel it is helping their child.”

In summary, the teachers' responses identified a number of challenges inherent in implementing a Hope programme with students of the school, including setting a goal and ensuring accessibility for students of all levels. They also suggested a number of appropriate approaches that could be used to enhance the students' engagement. Similar to the responses of the students, the settings of a Hope programme and the students' emotional management skills arose as important factors to be considered when formulating a Hope programme in the school.

4.3.3 Parents' Perspectives

The parents were invited to review the students' proposed 'hope-approaches' and to share their views about other possible applications of a Hope programme for their child. Seven themes were derived in total. They are (a) general views about the proposed 'hope-approaches', (b) clarifying the objective of the programme, (c) breaking goals into smaller steps, (d) settings, (e) social engagement, (f) Taking 'time' into consideration, and (g) parental involvement.

General views about the proposed 'hope-approaches'

This theme contains to the parents' views with regard to the proposed 'hope-approaches', including their positive opinions and concerns.

Most parents were positive about the proposed 'hope-approaches'. For instance, as Amy's mother indicated:

“..... if I should rate you I will give you 10/10..... that's very very good programme.”

However, a number of concerns were also raised, including the students' capacity to set goals, the students' emotional management skills and engagement, and the proposed approaches that was too common and over-positive.

For instance, similar to the teachers, Ben's mother was concerned with Ben's capacity to set a reachable goal and to evaluate the possible difficulties he might encounter whilst attempting to reach his goal. Ben's mother was particularly concerned with Ben's social life out of school, as he entered college, and she thought that Ben was not able to foresee the difficulties.

“..... he [Ben] has got a thought in his mind that if he can't be a footballer he is gonna be a DJ..... [Ben said] “I want to go to music college”..... he wouldn't cope in college..... It's a totally different scenario, he's been in XX (the special school) since he was 7 and it will be a totally different scenario for him, with children without a special need.....”

When invited to share her views about what Dan might not enjoy in a Hope programme using the proposed approaches, Dan's mother indicated that Dan had difficulties managing his emotions, which could make him unpredictable and impact on his capacity to engage with the intervention programme in a consistent manner.

“..... it depends on whether you get him [Dan] on a good day or a bad day..... If he's had a good night, or if he's had a good morning before going to school, yea, fine, you've got a top student, you've got a very polite and engaged child... if you've got one of the bad days you'll be like, “oh my god , he should be sanctioned”.”

Dan's mother also did not see the 'hope-approaches' as particularly enlightening. She indicated that those were all approaches she had been

using at home, and expected school to have already included similar strategies.

“..... I just think it's part and parcel of what you do with them..... that's what we tend to do at home anyway, I should imagine that's what school should strive to do, otherwise he won't be in a school like that [a special school]. So I don't see the big deal about that.”

Dan's mother also criticised that the proposed 'hope-approaches' were over-positive, overlooking the students' limitations and hence restricting their awareness of the areas needing improvement. Dan's mother suggested using a more 'balance' approach, one that could raise their awareness of personal limitations whilst being positive enough to motivate them, to serve the purpose of the programme. This suggestion will be further discussed in the next theme.

“..... [a programme like this] you are always looking for their strengths but you never quite see all of their weaknesses and that's what frightening because they are not gonna give it out voluntarily..... you obviously don't, you know, run it down their throat, it's... that's going too far, too negative but... as I said they need to know why they are there”

Clarify the objective of the programme

Dan's mother's response with regard to the over-positive approaches taken by the proposed hope programme highlighted the significance of clarifying the objective of the programme to the students, to elucidate their understanding of the rationale of the programme and their participation.

“.....they need to know why they are there [in the programme] and they need to know that they are gonna improve... or try to improve, or conquer whatever word you want to use with... but if they think they are just going into this for fun kind of sessions, then what's the point?”

A similar response was offered by Amy's mother.

“You have to just let them know..... the purpose of this programme is to gain whatsoever they want out of life to make them stronger.”

Breaking goals into smaller steps

When asked what Amy would like about the programme, Amy’s mother noted breaking goals into smaller steps could serve as a guideline for Amy to follow, which might then ease her frustration and anxiety about what is coming next.

“I think Amy will like the guideline, like step-by-step, and she will... because when she has something to follow, step-by-step that gives her more confidence, because she knows exactly what she will [needs to] do because... you know... she don’t feel panic and [has] to find out “what I must do what I must do...”

A similar response was shared by Ben’s mother; in order to engage and motivate Ben, it is ideal to use small and sequential steps, to first build up his confidence about completing the goal and his comfort committing to it.

“.....he needs small [steps], yea, cause he, he gets very overwhelmed if you said, if you said “you need to be positive, you need to be calm, you need to do this...” [all at once], he will be like “urrghh”..... so one-by-one, step-by-step with him..... very small steps, because if you overwhelmed him, he shuts down, and he won’t do it, he will just walk out”

Settings

When invited to share their views about what worries their children might have about a Hope programme, some parents highlighted their child’s anxiety towards overcrowding and implied that their child might require additional support in this. For instance, Amy and Ben’s mothers suggested taking into consideration the settings of the programme, responses that were congruent with the students’ and teachers’.

“..... she [Amy] don't like close... if more wide space, if she gets that she will more excel.” (Amy's mother)

“..... he [Ben] has got a lot of concerns about crowding..... he gets a bit panicky in a small room.....” (Ben's mother)

Social engagement

Amy's mother also highlighted the significance of having the opportunities to engage with school staff and friends as an approach to help ease Amy's anxiety towards overcrowding.

“.....She don't like anything with too much close[ness], she don't like that..... [but] if she have her best friends, and few other children where she finds well with, she will she will go to it..... but you can see that she.....

[is panicking?]

Yea..... [when crowded] just reassure her, and she will..... like teachers... yea use your words and say “ok Amy, you can do it, it is okay, no matter... just go there, do your best”, you need to give her a bit more encouragement, where there is a lot of people, she just needs little encouragement and reassurance.”

When sharing her ideas about how to promote positive thinking in the students, Amy's mother also expressed the value of having the students engage with each other, sharing their concerns and providing opportunities for them to obtain different points of view and to learn from each other. To Amy's mother, this approach promotes friendships as well as positive thinking in students.

“..... they share [concerns] and get other people opinion and what other people have done in that [situation], it just makes them feel better, they are stronger because everyone comes with different opinions and that's how they grow, you take from me, [I] take from you, take from that person..... build in them into positive relationships, thinking...”

Taking 'time' into consideration

The responses from some parents suggested that time plays a significant role when engaging the students in a Hope programme. The students' low level of on-task concentration and the additional time required for information processing suggested that a shorter session duration should be considered whilst increasing the number of sessions required.

For instance, when sharing Cat's experience at school, Cat's mother indicated that in order for Cat to engage, it was important for information to be made clear to her, and for adults to slow down their speech to allow information processing. Cat also had difficulties sustaining her on-task concentration, and her mother indicated she needed constant encouragement to help her focus. Although this was not specifically referring to the Hope programme, the responses of Cat's mother suggested that, in addition to considering approaches to ensure students' understanding of the information delivered and to allow additional time for information processing (as suggested by the teachers), the students' level of on-task attention also needs to be taken into account when formulating a Hope programme for the students; sessions with a shorter duration might be ideal to strengthen the students' engagement.

"If she don't understand the things at school, it makes it hard for her... sometimes she will come, she just says to me "mum, teacher saying something to me, I didn't understand" "[mum asked] why you didn't understand?" [Cat responded] "oh, sometimes they talking fast, sometimes I was sleeping mum, I didn't make an intention to understand the teacher"..... yea, she can't concentrate for long..... [you need to] motivate her every time, "Cat, do this, Cat, answer me this question" and you know, encourage her."

Parental Involvement

When the parents were asked about how they saw their role in a Hope programme, different views were obtained. The theme contains parental concerns with regard to their involvement and parental suggestions of the significance of using a home-school approach.

For instance, Ben's mother did not think that she had served as a positive role model for Ben and therefore was not optimistic about her playing an effective role in the programme.

"I don't... I don't think I could [play a role]..... I don't want him to turn out like me."

Amy and Cat's mother were also concerned about their availability to contribute effectively to the programme. As Amy's mother indicated:

"It's difficult..... because I work and sometimes it's so hectic with me."

On the other hand, Dan's mother highlighted the value of home-school collaboration; parents receiving feedback from school and vice versa, to ensure the consistency of the intervention outcomes.

"It has to be incorporated into every aspect of your life..... So for example if he [Dan] is in trouble at school, he comes home, he gets his Play Station taken away..... Because, it has to be consistent....."

In summary, most parents were positive about the students' suggested 'hope-approaches'. However, some concerns and additional suggestions were also raised, such as the perspective of one parent who thought the 'hope-approaches' were over-positive and could overlook areas the students

requiring further development and hence the importance of clarifying the objective of the programme purpose to the students. Parents' perceived self-capacity also appeared to play a significant role in their involvement and perceived parental role in a Hope programme.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study aimed to serve as an exploratory case study to generate a better understanding of the relevance and application of a Hope programme for young people from a moderate learning difficulties (MLD) special school setting by exploring the following research questions:

- 1 How are the terms used in the underlying principles of a Hope programme, i.e. hope, goal, pathway thinking (refers to plan in this research) and agency thinking (refers to motivation in this research), understood by these young people?
- 2 For all participants, what is the relevance and significance of using a Hope programme with these young people?
- 3 According to all participants, how might a Hope programme best be applied in such a setting?
- 4 What are the implications of this research, particularly for young people and schools with similar demographic backgrounds, as well as for the practice of educational psychology?

As such, this chapter is categorised into three major sections: discussion, implications and future research, and conclusion and reflections. A discussion of the findings obtained for the first three research questions is followed by the implications of the research for young people and schools with similar demographic backgrounds, as well as for the practice of educational psychologists. Recommendations for future research will also be included when discussing the implications of this study. This chapter concludes by

reflecting upon the study findings as well as the strategic role of educational psychologists in working systemically to support the mental health and wellbeing of young people from an MLD special school.

5.1 DISCUSSION

5.1.1 Students' Understandings of Terms

The students' understanding of the terms 'hope', 'goal', 'plan' (pathway thinking) and 'motivation' (agency thinking) was explored. A number of subthemes identified for the respective terms were congruent with those described in Snyder's hope theory (1994). In particular, the meaning of 'hope' described by the students was consistent with the underlying principles of Snyder's hope theory, which emphasised that hope should include both cognitive and emotional features and suggested that in order to raise individuals' hope levels, both the cognitive, such as believing in the attainability of a goal, and the emotional aspects of hope, such as anticipating the positive affect, should be taken into account as the 'facilitators'.

The students' understandings of the terms 'goal' and 'motivation' were also similar to Snyder's concepts. One of the subthemes identified from the students' understanding of the term goal was that a goal should be based on personal desires or wishes. This coincides with Snyder's hope theory, which highlights the significance of setting an intrinsically driven goal for self-motivation. This supports the association between Hope and individuals' subjective wellbeing (Snyder, 1994), resulting from individuals' perceived

attainability of a desired goal, and is in line with past research that advocates a focus on individuals' development of subjective wellbeing as an approach to enhance their mental health and life satisfaction, due to different prioritisation with regard to what concerns them the most in life (Austin, 2015). In the current study, perhaps due to the ethos of the school, which placed great emphasis on developing a curriculum that promoted the students' employability and independence skills, the goals identified by the students were mainly career-based.

In terms of motivation, the students' concepts of being persistent, overcoming challenges, and redirecting negative mindsets and attitudes towards more positive ones, were also similar to Snyder's agency thinking, suggesting the rationale for using this term when communicating the concept of 'agency thinking' to the students, as well as students of the school. In particular, these concepts expressed by the students were also the outcome of using the cognitive behavioural technique in a Hope programme (Taylor, Feldman et al., 2000), by fostering a more positive thinking pattern in students, suggesting the possibility of explaining the cognitive behavioural model to the students using similar ideas. Additionally, to the students, emotional management was also related to the term 'motivation', such as "keeping calm", suggesting a skill that the students perceived as crucial when trying to motivate themselves. This concept will be discussed again in a later section when discussing the application of the Hope programme.

Snyder (1994) perceived pathway thinking as the belief in one's capacity to problem-solve and plan action. Responses from the students regarding the term 'plan', used to replace pathway thinking in this research, highlighted the features of 'problem-solving' and 'action-planning' as explained in Snyder's pathway thinking. However, perhaps due to the simplified language used to convey the principles of Snyder's hope theory, responses from the students recruited, for the term 'plan' appeared to have disregarded the feature of 'believing in oneself' as conveyed in Snyder's pathway thinking. Nevertheless, Snyder's hope theory advocates for the significance of problem-solving and making effective plans in promoting self-confidence in personal action-planning skills. Thus, this could be considered an appropriate term to use in a Hope programme with the students, or students of the school, as creating plans to achieve a goal is often one of the agendas involved. It should be noted that although the students in the current study demonstrated good understanding about the meaning of plan, one of them showed difficulties formulating plans that were specific to her identified goal. This finding is in line with past research that indicates the problem-solving skills difficulties experienced by individuals with learning difficulties (Hartas & Donahue, 1996), suggesting the students' need for additional support in identifying steps to reach a goal.

The concepts derived from the students' responses with regard to the meaning of each individual term often overlapped with each other. This was particularly salient in the students' understandings of the terms hope, goal and motivation, suggesting that, to the students, agency thinking resonated more

with the idea of 'raising hope' and 'achieving goals', compared to pathway thinking. This finding is slightly different from Snyder's hope theory, which laid equal emphasis on both pathway and agency thinking in supporting the achievement of a goal, and their interrelationships with Hope. Perhaps due to the interrelatedness of the terms used, the overlapping of concepts also suggests that, to the students, those terms introduced may not be as distinguishable as described in Snyder's hope theory. This suggests that when describing Snyder's hope theory to the students, it might be more appropriate an approach to emphasise the relationships amongst the terms instead of highlighting the distinctiveness of each term. However, it was apparent that the general principles of Snyder's hope theory were not new to the students, although the terms used to explain the theory might need to be translated into simpler, everyday language.

5.1.2 Relevance and Significance

In general, in the current study, participants' responses supported the significance and relevance of using a Hope programme to support students of the MLD school. Notably, the teachers saw value in using the Hope concept to support students' transition (leaving school). The teachers voiced the potential for cultivating hope in students, which they thought might help ease their transition to adult life. Positive responses were also given by the students who indicated that being able to make plans (pathway thinking) and self-motivate (agency thinking) could bring about positive outcomes, such as developing a more positive sense of self and envisioning the attainability of a desired goal. Some students even identified the term 'goal' as a common

language used when sharing their ideas about a future career with friends, and they appreciated the opportunities provided to talk about their future goals. Taken together, these positive views suggest the potential and significance of using a Hope programme with students of the school.

However, responses from the parents were not as consistent. Most parents were positive about the idea of using a Hope programme with the students and indicated that it might support the students' development in a variety of areas, including self-motivation, mental health and views about their future. However, concerns were also raised with regard to the impact of negative parental influence and worries about the programme not being timely enough to serve its purpose, suggesting the significance of taking into consideration the systemic factors involved and to include it as part of an early intervention programme.

Whilst the use of the strengths-based approach of a Hope programme was valued, it was also controversial. One of the parents indicated that in order to motivate students of an MLD special school, it was useful to use a strengths-based approach to enhance the sense of self-competence and efficacy in the students. This response is congruent with Shogren (2013) who highlighted that, due to the emphasis on the positive aspects of individuals whilst embracing their limitations, it is ideal to use the principles of positive psychology and its strengths-based approach to support the mental health and wellbeing of individuals with learning difficulties.

However, the same parent showed concern about the over-positive ‘hope-approaches’ suggested and reflected that the focus on the positive aspects could restrict the students’ awareness of the areas needing further development and hence limit them to make progress in life. This idea contradicts the notion of positive psychology that underlies Hope programmes (Snyder, 1994). As discussed in Chapter 2, this type of critique was rejected by positive psychologists who claimed that the ideal approach for one to effectively reflect on and to problem-solve was to emphasise and build upon the positive traits of the person whilst embracing his/her weaknesses and limitations (e.g., Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000); a concept validated and documented in neuropsychology studies (e.g. Lin et al., 2014).

The same parent also criticised the suggested ‘hope-approaches’, summarised from past research and the students’ responses, as being too common a recommendation, and one she had already been using with her child. This raised concerns as to whether a Hope programme would present any added advantage for the students. Although conjectural, it could be that the students of this research had been receiving extensive support from the school and family, and, therefore, the suggested approaches may not be perceived as significant as they might be for students of a mainstream school setting. However, it should be noted that most of the suggested ‘hope-approaches’, though appearing to sound basic, were techniques used in a number of well-established therapeutic approaches, including cognitive-behavioural, solution-focused, and narrative therapies. Therefore, the appropriateness of considering the suggested approaches as generic is

speculative. Nevertheless, this demonstrated the significance of conducting this research by clarifying the relevance as well as concerns of using a Hope programme with students of the MLD school.

5.1.3 Application of the Programme

The participants identified a number of points that should be taken into consideration when applying a Hope programme to students of the MLD school and to enhance their engagement. Several of these points were similar to past research reporting the adaptations required when administering a therapeutic intervention with students with MLD, such as the significance of involving people within their social circle, including adults and friends from school (e.g. McParland, 2015). For instance, having opportunities to engage and work collaboratively with friends was identified as a useful approach to help the students develop plans to achieve goals and to manage their personal emotions. This suggestion is similar to the 'buddy system' introduced in a typical Hope programme (e.g. Marques, Lopez et al., 2011), suggesting the value of using a group-based approach when conducting the programme with the students, as well as students of the MLD school.

Additionally, responses from the students in the current study also suggested that in order for a Hope programme to be made accessible to them, it is important for the students to have access to adult support that could help them identify their goals based on their areas of strength and clarify the steps needed to achieve a goal. Unlike students recruited in past research (from mainstream schools) who were able to independently begin working towards

their goals once support had been provided for the identification of plans/steps in a Hope programme session and to review their progress weekly during a Hope programme session, these students recruited from the MLD special school appeared to require adult support within as well as outside of the programme. This might include having direct and specific instructions from adults sharing their experiences and skills with the students, as well as adults serving as role models by providing the students with more 'practical' learning opportunities, such as through shadowing and modelling, outside of the programme sessions.

Similar to past research that suggested individuals with learning difficulties are vulnerable to developing social and emotional difficulties (Allerton et al., 2011), emotional management was one of the major concerns the participants within the current study had regarding the students' capacity to engage in a Hope programme. As a programme focusing on teaching and cultivating hope, positive thinking and self-motivation in students, both the teacher- and parent-groups indicated that it could be challenging to redirect the students to more positive thinking patterns and mindsets and to reengage them in the session. This could eventually have an impact on the students' capacity to learn and benefit from a Hope programme. As a consequence in addition to suggestions of working collaboratively with friends, all three groups of participants suggested taking into consideration the setting of the programme, such as conducting it in a spacious and less crowded room. The teachers also suggested incorporating emotional management tools to encourage and support the students' independent use of emotional management skills within

the sessions. The importance of incorporating strategies to address the emotional difficulties of students has not been highlighted in relevant past research, suggesting the significance of this study in enlightening practitioners and future research in this area.

The participants had also identified a number of challenges that might have an impact on the students' engagement. In particular, the nature of a Hope programme, which is a group-based programme, might present a challenge to students who are uncomfortable sharing in a group setting. Thus, an ice-breaker activity and encouragement from adults were suggested to reinforce the group dynamic and ease the students' anxiety about group-sharing.

Although the use of visual support was highlighted, the teachers remained concerned about the practicality of using the proposed 'hope-approaches' with students who were less able and less vocal and suggested more activities be included to make it accessible for these students. This was in line with the initial concern of the researcher with regard to the operationalisation of a Hope programme for young people with MLD, due to the high demands it might make on individuals' cognitive and language skills. This suggests that more preliminary work should be done when implementing it with students who are less able.

The students' information processing speed and the support required to reinforce their understanding of the information delivered was also highlighted as a concern by both the teacher and parent groups. Similar concerns were raised by past research that recommended practitioners be mindful of the

language skills difficulties individuals with MLD might be experiencing and reminded practitioners to use simple language, incorporating visual aids and hands-on activities into therapeutic sessions (Hassiotis et al., 2013).

Strategies such as repeating the question, providing examples and making good use of pauses were recommended by the teachers. One of the parents also highlighted the low level of concentration her child was experiencing, which might restrict her attention, and hence understanding, of the information delivered within a Hope programme. Taken together, this suggests that the duration and number of sessions allocated for students of the school need to be adjusted, such as having additional numbers of sessions whilst decreasing the duration of each session to meet the students' level of concentration and increase retention of information and skills.

Setting goals is one of the major tasks to be completed by participants in a Hope programme, however, in this research, the teachers and parents highlighted the possible challenges some students might encounter in setting a reachable and intrinsically driven goal. They indicated that some students had difficulties understanding the concept of time and future whilst others lacked flexible thinking, which resulted in difficulties envisioning a future 'self' as well as comprehending the degree of challenges they might encounter when reaching a goal. This suggests that when implementing a Hope programme with students of the school, the term 'goal' has to be clearly defined and the temporality of a goal should be highlighted. Considering the students' difficulties with time concepts and visualising the challenges of achieving a goal, setting a short-term goal might be with students of the

school might be a more appropriate approach. Mediation may also be needed by these student to set a more reachable and 'realistic' goal.

The significance of parental involvement in a Hope programme was also noted by both teacher- and parent-groups. In order to reinforce a more consistent approach and ensure the effectiveness of a Hope programme, some teachers and parents recommended using a home-school approach, by establishing home-school communication and feedback with regard to the students' progress in a Hope programme. Although this was not highlighted in previous Hope programmes, this suggestion is similar to past research using therapeutic approaches with individuals with learning difficulties and emphasises the significance of considering systemic factors, such as family, in a therapeutic intervention to ensure the transferability of the skills learnt by students (Stimpson et al., 2013).

However, one parent was uncertain about her capacity to contribute effectively to support her child. She was concerned that she might serve as a negative role model, which could restrict her child's capacity to make progress in a Hope programme. The same parent, who was suffering from mental health difficulties, was also uncertain if the programme would be effective for her child due to the negative role model she thought she had been for him, as well as the challenging life experiences that her child had encountered. As Hope programmes are not a form of systemic therapy, it is unclear if any appropriate measures could be taken to support young people with MLD who also have parents with mental health difficulties. This, perhaps, could be an

area to be investigated by future research, exploring the possible impact of life experience and parental influence might have on students' responses to a Hope programme, as well as considering the appropriate adaptations or support that could be provided to enhance its effectiveness.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE STUDY

5.2.1 For Young People and Schools with Similar Demographic Backgrounds

Perhaps due to the perceived difficulties, past research indicates that young people with MLD have often been marginalised when it comes to investigating intervention programmes and strategies to support their wellbeing and mental health (James et al., 2015), not to mention including their voices into the development of one. In this research, a gradual approach was used by dividing the focus group interview into four sessions, personalising the discussion topics by adopting concrete examples from the students' experiences, and creating a good balance between researcher and students by directing the discussion to topics relevant and significant to both parties. The findings indicate that, if such gradual and appropriate approaches are taken, young people with MLD are capable of sharing their views and thoughts on factors that might encourage or impede their engagement in a wellbeing programme, as well as the support they require to help them engage. The methodological innovations presented in this research aimed to elucidate and advocate for future research in schools, to continue to access the voices of this marginalised group by adapting their methodologies

accordingly and to further explore programmes and strategies that could effectively support the mental health and wellbeing of young people with similar demographic backgrounds.

Implications for schools accommodating young people with MLD, or with similar demographic backgrounds, were also highlighted. In particular, the principles underpinning a Hope programme appear to in line with schools using a strengths-based approach, as well as the students' needs for hope and support and opportunities to set, share and achieve goals. Specifically, enhancing a more positive sense of self and views about the future was suggested as one of the most significant and possible outcomes of using a Hope programme with the students. Whilst past research suggests that young people who have learning difficulties and attend special school tend to develop a more negative self-concept than those in a mainstream setting (Griffiths, 2007), these findings are valuable and enlightening as they indicate the potential of using a Hope programme to support the development of the abovementioned areas in the group of young people who took part in the study, and possibly other young people with similar demographic backgrounds. Whilst further research is required to validate this hypothesis, the school contexts should also be taken into consideration in programme formulation; this includes:

- The educational context and degree of preparation involved, such as by promoting the students' understanding of 'time' and 'future' to support their identification of a goal;

- The physical context of the school and classrooms, including whether they are spacious enough for the students to feel comfortable and hence engage in a similar programme;
- The social context of the school, such as considering whether opportunities and space could be provided for young people to engage with and have access to support from familiar school staff and peers, as well as whether positive home-school relationships has been established to triangulate information with regard to young people's progress and to support families in need.

Furthermore, post-school transition (leaving school) was identified as one of the primary agendas for these young people, evident from the students' career-focused goal setting and the teachers' indication of using a programme to support the students' post-school transition. These findings provide valuable information for practitioners, and future research intends to further investigate how a Hope programme could be adapted for students of an MLD school. Consideration may include directing the focus of the research towards supporting the students' preparation for post-school transition or adulthood. However, as indicated earlier, the students' concept of future should also be taken into consideration whilst formulating and implementing relevant programmes, and the meaning of 'goal' should be clearly identified with a timescale that is recommended to be a short-term target. If a longer-term goal is to be identified, the research design needs to consider including a follow-up aspect.

5.2.2 For the Practice of Educational Psychologists

The research findings enlighten the practice of Educational Psychologists (EPs) working directly with young people from an MLD special school. For instance, exploring the students' voice and future goal, particularly after secondary school, is often a major role of professionals, including EPs, working directly with young people with SEND around transition (DfE, 2015). The students' understandings of the term 'goal' and the support they might require to set and achieve a goal, provides insight into EPs' practices when supporting students from similar demographic backgrounds to identify a future goal and support plan. The students' lack of understanding of the concept of 'future' also suggests that EPs should take extra care to assess students' understanding of the relevant terms, such as future and goal, when attempting to create a future plan that is congruent with their personal wishes. Additionally, research findings that point to the significance of having opportunities to engage with the young people's social circle also suggests that when attempting to promote the mental health and wellbeing of young people from an MLD special school, EPs should consider employing therapeutic group work.

This research has also broadened the understanding of other educational stakeholders, including teachers, parents and school, with regard to the roles of EPs. Recent research by Atkinson et al. (2014) reported a misconception about the roles of EPs that EPs' accountability was often restricted to assessments and statutory duties. Nonetheless, as indicated earlier, the role of EPs is multifaceted. One of the key roles of EPs involves working

systemically to promote the development and wellbeing of children and young people. As a trainee EP using the person-centred approach in this research, it reveals the ideal position the EPs hold in supporting schools to develop a bespoke wellbeing programme, an approach highlighted for schools in the revised SEND code of practice (2014). This implication has become particularly valuable in recent years, when numerous national advices, including the SEND code of practice (2014/2015), have highlighted the obligations of professionals in developing partnerships with young people, parents/carers and school staff, and providing necessary advice and support to inform their decision making in the formulation, administration and examination of the support the young people require and receive (Public Health England, 2015; DfE, 2016).

The current study also demonstrates that using a holistic and person-centred approach which considers the views and demographic backgrounds of school, parents and young people themselves, EPs are in an ideal position to work systemically to promote the mental health and wellbeing of young people from a marginalised population. In particular, responses from the teachers suggested that, as a result of this research, they were beginning to reflect on the significance of cultivating hope in the students and to contemplate strategies to include this concept into their curriculum. This outcome is particularly valuable in illuminating the role of EPs in making a difference at a school level, by exploring and conveying possible psychological approaches to support students' wellbeing and using the voices of the children and young people themselves to raise the awareness of schools and parents with regard

to the support they require. Thus, this research encourages future studies to continue to utilise the strategic position and skills EPs hold in working systemically with schools, parents and young people, to relentlessly ensure equal opportunities are advocated for those at risk of educational and social disadvantage.

5.3 CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

This study found that in general, a Hope programme was perceived as mostly relevant and significant to supporting the wellbeing of students of the school, and to help develop a more positive view about their future. Specifically, responses from the students and parents suggested the potential of the programme, particularly its emphasis on supporting the students to identify and attain a goal, which most parents and students indicated as beneficial for the students' development of a more positive sense of self and views about life and future. The teachers also highlighted the appropriateness of the suggested 'hope-approaches' with students of the school, although more adaptations are required for it to be accessible to those who are less able.

Whilst the principles of a Hope programme sound promising, it might not be the singular solution for the challenges faced by young people with moderate learning difficulties. In particular, one of the parents indicated that the proposed 'hope-approaches' were too positive and too common for her child. The teachers' and parents' concerns over the students' difficulties in setting a realistic goal also suggests that, if appropriate measures are not taken, using

a Hope programme with these students might lead them to be overly optimistic about the attainability of a goal, which might then lead to an unpleasant experience. According to Snyder's hope theory, this may subsequently diminish the students' confidence to achieve a goal and their level of Hope. Thus, the approaches (or strategies) suggested in this research should be taken into consideration when formulating and implementing a Hope programme in schools or with students of similar demographic backgrounds.

In summary, the present study generated new knowledge and enlightened practitioners in a number of areas. This includes the appropriate measures to be taken by future research when using a Hope programme with young people from an MLD special school, the methodology to be considered by future research when accessing the voices of young people with MLD, and the unique and strategic position and skills EPs possess in supporting the formulation and development of an evidence-informed approach that is bespoke to young people from an MLD special school. In this research, the term 'evidence' is defined by the local context and perspectives of the targeted population. A definition that is in line with a number of recent studies focusing on supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people (White, 2016; Wigelsworth et al., 2012). This study is particularly valuable when practitioners of other disciplines are struggling to find their role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people from a learning difficulties special school setting, the strategic position and unique skills an EP has places him/her in an ideal position to shed light on this area.

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Appendix A: Literature review search terms

Date	Search Terms
February – April 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope definition • Hope theory • Snyder's hope theory • Hope Programme • Hope Intervention • Hope intervention programme AND learning difficulty* • Hope programme AND intellectual disability* • Hope intervention programme AND students • Hope intervention programme AND children • Hope intervention programme AND young people • Hope intervention programme AND special school • Impacts of moderate learning difficulties • Impacts of learning difficulties / intellectual disability
July – August 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive behavioural therapy AND learning difficulty* / intellectual disability* • Narrative therapy AND learning difficulty* / intellectual disability* • Solution-focused AND learning difficulty* / intellectual disability* • Positive psychology • Positive psychology intervention programme • Positive psychology in United Kingdom • Experience in special schools • Mainstream vs. special school • Definition of wellbeing / subjective wellbeing
April 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope programme AND special needs • Hope intervention programme

Appendix B: Information about the recruited school

School self-evaluation form (Autumn, 2015)

SUMMARY SELF-EVALUATION Autumn 2015	
SUMMARY EVALUATION	
Context	School is currently funded for 112 pupils aged 5-18 with statements of special educational needs for moderate learning difficulties (expanding to 5-19 in September 2016). Most pupils meet at least 2 criteria of disadvantage (family worklessness and poverty, single parent families, generational special needs, medical conditions, families with mental health issues or addiction) and many pupils have severe and complex learning difficulties including autistic spectrum disorders, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, medical conditions and speech and language impairment. Approximately 66% of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, 73% receive free school meals (45% is considered high and we are 10-20% higher than all other Talsington schools) and 37% are girls (Data accurate on 20.7.15). The school is located on two sites one mile apart. The primary department was co-located on the third floor of Montem primary school in 2008. The secondary department was co-located in a brand new purpose-built, two-storey building attached to Highbury Grove secondary school in 2009 (PFI funded).
School Development Plan priorities 2014-2015	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the consistency of the effectiveness of adults, other than teachers, working in the classroom in order to provide increased opportunities for students to learn independently. 2. Increase the proportion of students in the school who make rapid progress and reach high standards by the time they leave school. 3. Embed the outstanding bespoke curriculum for Year 12 as they move into Year 13 and plan for the new cohort of Year 12.
Ofsted quantitative and qualitative judgements	<p>Last inspection Dec 2012:</p> <p>Achievement of pupils Outstanding 1</p> <p>Quality of teaching Outstanding 1</p> <p>Behaviour and safety of pupils Outstanding 1</p> <p>Leadership and management Outstanding 1</p> <p>Overall effectiveness Outstanding 1</p> <p>(Previous inspection October 2009:) Good 2</p> <p>Achievement Judgement Outstanding</p> <p>Strengths: Pupils make outstanding progress across the school, particularly in the key skills of literacy and numeracy. This is as a result of daily morning key skills lessons, as well as formal English and mathematics lessons throughout the week.</p>
Achievement	Outstanding
Teaching	Outstanding
Behaviour and Safety	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Outstanding
Overall Effectiveness	Outstanding
<p>Challenge partners Quality Assurance Review November 2014- Summary of Judgements</p> <p>Achievement, Quality of Teaching, School Improvement Strategies & Impact on Challenge Partnership all firmly within the Outstanding judgment</p> <p>Area of Excellent Practice re-confirmed: Outreach</p> <p>Our self-evaluation is that Samuel Rhodes School is Outstanding.</p>	
<p>Key:</p> <p>Comic sans black text =Ofsted descriptors Purple text= Qualitative SPS evidence</p> <p>Green Highlighting=Progress from previous year</p>	

Ofsted report (2012, p. 1)

School report

**Inspection dates**

5–6 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils**This is an outstanding school.**

- Pupils make outstanding progress across the school, particularly in the key skills of literacy and numeracy. This is as a result of daily morning key skills lessons, as well as formal English and mathematics lessons throughout the week.
- The proportion of pupils achieving nationally recognised qualifications is improving year on year.
- Because of a sustained focus on improvement by the senior leaders and governors, pupils' achievement and the proportion of good or better teaching have improved since the previous inspection. Teachers plan their work effectively to ensure pupils' learning needs and individual targets are fully met.
- Highly effective class management by staff means pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are excellent in lessons and around the buildings. Learning is rarely disrupted because of disruptive behaviour.
- In the school's surveys of their views, almost all parents and carers agree that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils also told the inspectors that the school deals effectively with any of their concerns.
- The headteacher and the senior leadership team provide outstanding leadership of the school, ensuring it meets fully its vision of providing a safe and creative learning environment where pupils can enjoy, learn and achieve.
- There are excellent arrangements for regular reviews of staff performance and the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection have been dealt with successfully.
- Fellow professionals speak highly of the impact of the school's outreach service in the local authority.
- The governing body is highly effective in its role as a supportive and 'critical friend' of the school.

Ofsted report (2012, p. 2)**Information about this inspection**

- The inspectors observed nine lessons, seeing nine teachers. Four of the lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with small groups of pupils at both of the school's sites. Meetings were also held with the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and with the local authority's Director of Schools and the Head of School Improvement. In addition, a telephone conversation was held with the governor with responsibility for safeguarding.
- The lead inspector took account of the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the results of the school's own regular parental surveys.
- The inspectors observed the school's practice and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. They also considered the school's data on pupils' progress, documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work, governing body documentation and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

■■■■■■■■■■, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

■■■■■■■■■■

Additional inspector

Ofsted report (2012, p. 3)**Full report****Information about this school**

- [REDACTED] provides education for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Since the previous inspection, there has been an increase in the number of pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties, including a minority with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school is on two sites, one mile apart. The primary site is co-located on the third floor of a local mainstream primary school and the secondary school building is co-located to a mainstream secondary school, with shared dining and sports facilities.
- The school provides an outreach service for mainstream schools within the local authority.
- Currently, the large majority of pupils are boys of White British heritage. The remainder come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A small minority speak English as an additional language. A few are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium, which provides additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above the national average.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection and there is also a new Chair of the Governing Body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of the effectiveness of adults, other than teachers, working in the classroom in order to provide increased opportunities for students to learn independently.
- Increase the proportion of students in the school who make rapid progress and reach high standards by the time they leave school.

Ofsted report (2012, p. 4)

Inspection judgements**The achievement of pupils is outstanding**

- As a result of their moderate learning difficulties and other special needs, pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below that in mainstream schools. The focus on improving communication skills in the primary section allows all to follow the National Curriculum. Although attainment remains below that found nationally in mainstream schools at the end of Year 11, pupils achieve outstandingly well in relation to their starting points.
- Daily literacy and numeracy lessons each morning are not only highly effective in supporting pupils' progress in English and mathematics but also across all subjects. Significant strides are made in improving reading because all pupils have improved their ability to 'sound out' letters and groups of letters when dealing with difficult and/or new words. This improves their confidence in learning in all subjects.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education, all moving on to further education, employment or work-based training. Over the last three years, pupils' rates of progress have improved significantly, which has resulted in high levels of achievement in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) from their starting points. Additional courses provided since the last inspection have resulted in an increase in the range of nationally recognised qualifications achieved by pupils.
- There are no significant differences in the rates of progress made by boys or girls, different ethnic groups, those who speak English as an additional language or those supported by pupil premium funding. In each case the school closes the gaps significantly for these pupils.
- The school's accurate and detailed records are effective in supporting pupils' learning and confirm that they make excellent progress over time. Each pupil has clear and achievable individual targets set, which are reviewed regularly in order to assess the progress being made towards them and to decide if any extra support is required.
- In a primary literacy focused lesson, younger pupils were improving their language skills exceptionally well in describing how objects were linked. In addition, there was a sharp focus on improving pupils' social skills, through taking turns and listening to one another.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- A significant strength of the teaching is the daily literacy and numeracy lessons, particularly as not all teachers are English or mathematics specialists. The teaching in these basic skills has been very effective over time and has improved this aspect of pupils' progress extremely well. In addition, a teacher-led daily 15 minute reading session at the end of the morning in the secondary school contributed very well to aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teachers know their pupils well and, as a result of careful checking of pupils' progress over time, ensure they plan work that offers suitable challenge to all. Where appropriate, targeted extra support from other adults is also provided in lessons. In a secondary science lesson, for example, this was highly effective in enabling each pupil to safely test for and to work out the 'pH' scales of a range of chemical products found in their houses. Both the teacher and the other adult supporting in this lesson moved around to good affect questioning pupils' understanding and checking on their progress. By the end of the lesson all pupils had a secure grasp of how to carry out this test and recognised why the different products had different 'pH' values.
- At the start of lessons, teachers routinely recap on previous learning and make sure pupils understand what is expected of them by the end. In literacy lessons, for example, teachers make sure pupils consolidate their knowledge and understanding of how sounds correlate with letters or groups of letters in order to help them further improve their reading. This then improves their confidence when asked to read aloud to the class.
- The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection. However,

Ofsted report (2012, p. 5)

senior leaders are aware that there are some inconsistencies in the effectiveness of support from other adults who support teachers in lessons, for example in encouraging pupils to be more independent in their learning.

- Older pupils told the lead inspector that one of the best things about the school was the teaching because it helped them learn and move on.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils respond excellently to the school's routines, particularly on arrival and departure, as well as during lunchtimes and lesson changeover time. In the secondary school, for example, pupils queue sensibly to collect their food and chat socially to one another in small groups. In both schools, pupils were friendly and courteous and made the inspectors feel welcome.
- Unauthorised absence is very low, which reflects pupils' enjoyment of their education. Behaviour over time has improved significantly. There have been no recent permanent exclusions and fixed-term exclusions in relation to the number of pupils involved have fallen. The number of recorded 'serious' behaviour incidents has also declined considerably.
- The school takes all necessary steps to ensure pupils are safe. Each pupil's behaviour is carefully tracked and individual cases are reviewed regularly. When appropriate, behaviour management plans and individual risk assessments are used and are highly effective in managing pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally excellent because teachers enliven learning with a variety of well-chosen activities and tasks, including the use of ICT resources. Where frustrations arise, teachers deal with pupils in a calm and purposeful way, thus ensuring the learning of others is not disrupted.
- In lessons seen, there were no incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils work well as individuals and in small groups, all collaborating well with the adults in the room. In a secondary school numeracy lesson, pupils listened to one another recite their three times table as well as testing one another as pairs. At the end the whole group came together to play a 'pass the ball' game to further consolidate their learning.
- Almost all parents and carers who responded to the school's latest survey agreed that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils too feel they are safe, younger pupils telling the team inspector that they enjoyed coming to school and that they felt the school cared for them.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's drive and ambition have led to continuing and sustained improvement, building further on the strengths identified at the previous inspection. Senior leaders and other staff want the best outcomes possible for all pupils. Checking on the quality of teaching and data about pupils' progress is a high priority and helps the headteacher recommend whether teachers should be paid more. Immediate action is taken to deal with any areas identified for improvement.
- All staff and governors are involved in evaluating the school's effectiveness and there are regular surveys of parents' and carers' views. Self-evaluation is accurate and supports action planning for further improvements, including raising the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards when leaving school.
- As a result of the school's commitment to equality, all groups of pupils, including those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, make outstanding progress in both their academic and personal development.
- The curriculum, mirroring that found in mainstream schools, is planned and taught highly effectively to make sure the needs of all pupils are fully met. The key strength is the added focus to improve pupils' progress in the key skills of literacy and numeracy. In addition, it is

Ofsted report (2012, p. 6)


highly effective in supporting all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- The local authority knows the school well and has high regard for its outreach service. It provides a light touch but effective support, enabling the school to sustain its capacity for continuing improvement.

- **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has now become highly effective in its role as a supportive and critical friend of the school. It is effective in holding leaders to account for the school's performance and pupils' achievements. It rigorously checks the performance of the headteacher, including how well staff performance is monitored and related to pay and promotion. In addition, it makes sure statutory requirements are met and safeguarding procedures are fully in place. The finance committee oversees the allocation and use of pupil premium. Currently, most of this money pays for a home-school support worker, which has improved attendance and involvement of parents and carers in their children's education. Extra support is also provided for pupils in school. As a result of this support, pupils' entitled to the pupil premium are now making outstanding progress and closing gaps with all pupils nationally.

Ofsted report (2015, p. 1)

PROTECT-INSPECTION		
[REDACTED] Kings Orchard 1 Queens Street Bristol, BS2 0HQ	T 0300 123 1231 Text Phone: 0161 6188524 enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk www.ofsted.gov.uk	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 30%;"> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> </div> <div style="width: 60%;"> <p>[REDACTED] [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> </div> </div>		
<p>[REDACTED]</p>		
<p>No formal designation monitoring inspection of [REDACTED] MLD School</p>		
<p>Following my visit to your school on 3 June 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss behaviour in your school.</p>		
<p>The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about behaviour at the school.</p>		
<p>Evidence</p>		
<p>Inspectors considered evidence including:</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ observations of students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons ■ observations of students' behaviour throughout the day, including at the start and end of the school day, break time and lunchtime ■ discussion with students about their experiences in the school ■ documentary evidence about behaviour, including information about attendance and exclusions ■ discussions with school leaders and staff. 		

Ofsted report (2015, p. 2)

Having evaluated all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers have taken effective action to maintain the high standards of behaviour and attitudes identified at the school's previous inspection.

Context

██████████ School caters for students with moderate learning difficulties. Since the last inspection in 2012, the school has extended its provision to include a sixth form. There are now 85 students on roll aged between five and 18. Around two thirds of these are boys. The school is on two sites. The primary school is co-located on the top floor of a mainstream primary school while the secondary provision is co-located with a mainstream secondary school. Around two thirds of the students are in the secondary or sixth form phases of their education. Over half of the students are from a range of minority ethnic groups, and just under half speak English as an additional language. More than three quarters are eligible for free school meals. All students have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of students both within lessons and around school is of a very high standard. The students' attitudes towards their work are impressive as they demonstrate an eagerness to learn and develop new skills. Members of staff at all levels demonstrate an excellent understanding of the individual needs of students and adapt their approach accordingly.

Firmly embedded routines, which are implemented consistently, support students very well. For example, students are greeted by familiar staff at the start of the day and enter the school relaxed, happy and ready to learn. They leave any belongings in lockers before moving on to their classrooms. If any student appears unsettled or unhappy they are given time to share anxieties with a member of staff before entering the classroom. Similar routines are in place for break times and at the end of the day. This reduces anxiety and enables students to develop their independence skills as, over time, the familiar routine reduces the need for close staff support.

Staff members are vigilant in their supervision of students at less formal times such as break times and during changes between lessons. They stand at key points so that all areas can be viewed, and provide a supportive presence rather than a disciplinary stance. This enables students to develop their independence in moving from one activity to another and in interacting with their peers appropriately.

As at the time of the last inspection, students engage in learning activities well. Teachers and support staff use praise well and communicate with students as appropriate to their need using visual supports or basic sign language if needed.

Ofsted report (2015, p. 3)

During this inspection, students were observed to work effectively in a variety of ways, either individually, in small groups or with intensive adult support.

Staff members use the school systems consistently to reward positive behaviour. They have also set up individualised reward systems which motivate students. For example, if one student wears her glasses throughout the day, then on Tuesdays and Thursdays she is appropriately rewarded. Reminders of expected behaviour, such as 'good listening', are visually displayed in classrooms, and students respond positively to these.

Members of staff at all levels act as excellent role models for students. They remain calm and relaxed when challenged by pupils. They do not raise their voices but provide quiet supportive words or actions. Their consistency and fairness are recognised by the students.

At the primary site, pupils and staff face the considerable challenge of negotiating numerous stairs as they move from the classrooms at the top of their shared building, down to the shared dining room, down again to the playground, and then back up again at the end of the lunch break. This is managed well. On returning to the top floor, all pupils returned immediately to their classrooms and very swiftly engaged in learning without any fuss or stragglers.

At both sites, a variety of activities is available for students during break times. These include football, basketball and 'quiet' areas on the secondary site, where some older students also run a tuck shop. Primary-aged pupils enjoy riding bikes, playing cricket and using the climbing frame. Students choose their preferred activity and staff facilitate their involvement in it. At the secondary site, outdoor space is very limited, however, for those who do not wish to play football. This resulted in some boisterous chasing games taking place in the 'quiet' area and overflowing into the building. School leaders are working with leaders from the co-located school in order to extend the space available at less formal times. This will involve the removal of fences and secure greater freedom of movement for students.

The school has an established system for rewarding positive behaviour and sanctions where behaviour falls short of the expected high standards. Students talk proudly of receiving 'purple slips' for doing something well. They understand and can explain the points system which results in their attaining a bronze, silver or gold certificate each week based on the total number of points gained. The majority of students gain gold certificates each week. School information shows that this system has improved behaviour over time, as the number of students gaining gold certificates each week has increased. Parents and carers receive weekly reports informing them of their child's achievements in terms of both learning and behaviour. The school has recently extended the system to make points available for positive behaviour at break times in addition to lesson times. Leaders recognise that further extension of the range of strategies used to monitor behaviour at less formal times would enable them to pinpoint exactly where any issues occur and address them rapidly.

Ofsted report (2015, p. 4)



Similarly, poor behaviour is dealt with in a structured and graduated manner. Students who display inappropriate behaviour receive green, amber or red report cards which may result in a detention or missed break times. School information shows that use of these report cards is decreasing, with only one student receiving two red report cards in a term. The number of serious incidents requiring the use of physical intervention has also decreased considerably from 95 in the 2012/13 year to 69 in 2013/14.

The school has comprehensive systems to track and monitor the behaviour of students. Any incident is logged, recorded and analysed to identify any patterns. This information shows that, term by term, the number of incidents is decreasing. In the 2013/14 year, only four incidents of bullying were recorded. Students confirm that bullying is extremely rare, and that any incidents are followed up rigorously by staff who make sure that it does not happen again. Students spoken to during the inspection were adamant that racist and homophobic language has been eliminated because staff have 'come down hard on it'.

An effective system for calling senior staff to support teachers when incidents occur minimises the disruption to learning for other students. The senior leader attending makes careful notes of why they were called, what actions they took and how long the student was out of class. They also record whether or not the student is required to make up lost learning time through a detention and how this will be done. The majority of these instances result in students returning to class within 10 minutes. The school has a small 'reflection room' where students who need a short time away from the class can be supported in order to return to their learning or continue their work away from others for a short time.

As a result of the very successful strategies employed to improve behaviour, the number of fixed-term exclusions has significantly decreased. From very high levels in 2012/13 when 24 fixed-term exclusions were imposed, there were only 17 in 2013/14 and 11 in the 2014/15 year to date. Students who had been excluded in the past were able to explain to me how the school systems have taught them to control their behaviour. One student, now in the sixth form, told the inspector that when younger, his behaviour was poor, but the school has helped him to understand why it is important to treat people with respect, 'whoever they are'. He could also reflect on the importance of this as he moves on to college next year.

The attendance of students has remained at around 92% since the last inspection. School leaders have identified a target group of students whose attendance is poor, and work with them to improve this. Governors receive information about attendance and exclusions regularly. They are aware that while attendance is low compared with secondary schools nationally, it compares well with that in other special schools. The school analyses information about exclusions and attendance carefully, identifying repeat offenders and ensuring that those who struggle with their behaviour make good progress over time in this regard.

Ofsted report (2015, p. 5)



Priorities for further improvement

- The school should take steps to extend the range of activities undertaken to check that behaviour at less formal times, such as break times, is always of a high standard.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for [REDACTED], the Chair of the Governing. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Her Majesty's Inspector

School curriculum (p. 1)

Secondary Curriculum 2016-2017

KS3 Curriculum

We have 4 KS3 classes who cover English, Mathematics, Science, Computing (including coding) Humanities (Geography, History and RE), PE, Design and Technology, Food Technology, Dance, Drama, Art and Music. All subjects focus on a specific topic for the term so pupils can learn to transfer information into different contexts. This Term (Sept to Dec) our topic is Superheroes.

<u>Literacy</u>	<p>As well as 3 discrete English lessons a week, in KS3 and KS4 all pupils are streamed for a daily Ruth Miskin Literacy Programme, which is a complete phonics programme. Pupils are reassessed every half term and those not making expected progress received 1-1 support lessons. At the start of the year 2015: 11 pupils had already finished the programme and were working on comprehension skills. A further 46% of pupils have now finished the programme and 31% of pupils now have only 1 level left. The completion of this programme means pupils have functional reading and writing skills</p> <p>All our staff are trained to teach Ruth Miskin Phonics so this level of literacy support continues in every lesson to support pupils with their acquisition of reading and writing skills. Pupils also have 5 guided reading sessions a week in afternoon tutorial.</p>
<u>Speaking and Listening</u>	<p>We deliver Philosophy for Children sessions once a week to help pupils develop their speaking and listening, reasoning and debating skills. Pupils in KS3 also have 1 drama lesson a week to develop their confidence in performing and talking in front of others.</p>
<u>Mathematics</u>	<p>In KS3 pupils have 3 discrete Mathematics lessons following the new curriculum at the appropriate level as well as one additional session a week using Mathletics which is our online homework programme which helps pupils consolidate their learning and independence in mathematics.</p>
<u>PSCHE</u>	<p>Pupils have one session a week on PSCHE as well as topic days when we look into some topics as a whole school project.</p>

School curriculum (p. 2)

Secondary Curriculum 2016-2017

KS4 Curriculum

We have 4 KS4 classes and 2 separate pathways for pupils to follow.

Pathway 1

Pupils following Pathway 1 will take English (Entry Level, GCSE or Level 1) , Mathematics(Entry Level, GCSE or Level 1), Science, (Entry Level or Level 1) Computing(Entry Level or Level 1 at the appropriate level and PE .

Pupils will also follow an Arts Award Course at Entry 3 or Level 1, a certificated personal development programme and an independence development programme.

Pathway 2

Pupils following Pathway 2 will chose from 2 options, 1 from each group. Some of these options combine towards a final examination and some are discrete 1 or 2 year courses. Staff support pupils with option choices and parents are also involved in this decision.

Option 1	<p>Drama Entry level - Entry Pathways</p> <p>Design and Technology BTEC Entry 3 / Level 1</p> <p>BTEC Fashion and Clothing Level 1</p> <p>Music Entry 3 Entry Pathways.</p>
Option 2	<p>Catering BTEC Entry 3 / Level 1</p> <p>Sports Science BTEC Entry 3 / Level 1</p> <p>Hair & Beauty BTEC Entry 3 / Level 1</p> <p>Design and Technology BTEC Entry 3 / Level 1.</p>

Depending on personal pathway some pupils will also follow a 2 year ASDAN course at Bronze or Silver (Entry 3) or COPE (GCSE) level

School curriculum (p. 3)

Secondary Curriculum 2016-2017

<u>Literacy</u>	<p>As well as 3 discrete English lessons a week, in KS3 and KS4 all pupils are streamed for a daily Ruth Miskin Literacy Programme, which is a complete phonics programme. Pupils are reassessed every half term and those not making expected progress received 1-1 support lessons. At the start of the year 2015: 11 pupils had already finished the programme and were working on comprehension skills. A further 46% of pupils have now finished the programme and 31% of pupils now have only 1 level left. The completion of this programme means pupils have functional reading and writing skills</p> <p>All our staff are trained to teach Ruth Miskin Phonics so this level of literacy support continues in every lesson to support pupils with their acquisition of reading and writing skills. Pupils also have 5 guided reading sessions a week in afternoon tutorial.</p>
<u>Speaking and Listening</u>	<p>We deliver Philosophy for Children sessions once a week to help pupils develop their speaking and listening, reasoning and debating skills.</p>
<u>Mathematics</u>	<p>In KS4 pupils have 3 discrete Mathematics lessons following an examination curriculum at the appropriate level as well as one additional session a week using Mathletics which is our online homework programme which helps pupils consolidate their learning and independence in mathematics.</p>
<u>PSCHE</u>	<p>Pupils have one session a week on PSCHE as well as topic days when we look into some topics as a whole school project.</p> <p>In year 11, all pupils complete a 2 week work experience programme either independently or with support.</p> <p>We also offer a travel-training programme to support pupils become independent when they are ready.</p>

School curriculum (p. 4)

Secondary Curriculum 2016-2017

KS5 Curriculum

We have 2 KS5 classes and 2 separate pathways.

Pathway 1 (Higher level Pathway- the pathway to work)

This is a 3 year programme with the vision to enable our young adults to transition into meaningful part time work.

Pupils following Pathway 1 will take English (Entry Level, GCSE or Level 1), Mathematics (Entry Level, GCSE or Level 1), Computing (Entry Level or Level 1).

Pupils will also follow a BTEC Level 1 Certificate, Extended Certificate or Diploma in WorkSkills and an Arts Award Level 1 Bronze Award or Level 2 Silver Award.

Pathway 2 (Entry Level Pathway, supporting pupils with independence)

This is a 3 year programme with the vision to enable our young adults to transition into meaningful work or community inclusion with the appropriate health provider.













Pupils following pathway 2 will take English (Entry Level), Mathematics (Entry Level), ICT (Entry Level).

Pupils will also follow a BTEC Entry 3 Level Award or Certificate in WorkSkills and ASDAN PSD Entry Level Certificate.

<u>Literacy</u>	<p>As well as 3 discrete English lessons a week, in KS3, KS4 and KS5 all pupils are streamed for a daily Ruth Miskin Literacy Programme, which is a complete phonics programme. Pupils are reassessed every half term and those not making expected progress received 1-1 support lessons. At the start of the year 2015: 11 pupils had already finished the programme and were working on comprehension skills. A further 46% of pupils have now finished the programme and 31% of pupils now have only 1 level left. The completion of this programme means pupils have functional reading and writing skills</p> <p>All our staff are trained to teach Ruth Miskin Phonics so this level of literacy support continues in every lesson to support pupils with their acquisition of reading and writing skills. Pupils also have 5 guided reading sessions a week in afternoon tutorial.</p>
<u>Speaking and Listening</u>	<p>We deliver Philosophy for Children sessions once a week to help pupils develop their speaking and listening, reasoning and debating skills.</p>

School curriculum (p. 5)

Secondary Curriculum 2016-2017

<u>Mathematics</u>	In KS5 pupils have 3 discrete Mathematics lessons following an examination curriculum at the appropriate level as well as one additional session a week using Mathletics which is our online homework programme which helps pupils consolidate their learning and independence in mathematics.
<u>PSCHE</u>	<p>Pupils have one session a week on PSCHE as well as topic days when we look into some topics as a whole school project.</p> <p>We also offer a travel-training programme to support pupils become independent when they are ready.</p>
<u>Work Experience</u>	<p>All learners will have the opportunity to take part in a 6 weeks mentoring program with one of our partnership businesses in order to develop positive work skills and to increase confidence within the employment sector.</p> <p>Learners will be placed on a weekly extended work experience placement with the support of our careers advisor. Time will be given throughout the term for regular reflection and mentoring support for young people on work experience placements.</p>
<u>Leisure Activities/Physical Education</u>	<p>Pupils will learn skills and confidence in accessing local leisure facilities in order to increase their understanding of travel training, social skills, money management, and health and wellbeing. (Links with GLL)</p> <p>Pupils will also take part in 2 discrete PE lessons each week.</p>
<u>Community inclusion and good health</u>	<p>This aspect of the curriculum is key in developing a more in depth knowledge of work, finances, health, independence and social skills across a wide range of organisations through bespoke workshops, lectures, short courses, and taster sessions. These will be delivered through our partnership links with:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> </div> </div> <p>This list is not exhaustive as we are always looking to develop new links with local organisations and businesses. We have social links with Stormont House 6th form in Hackney. We are also looking at developing volunteering opportunities with local charities.</p>

Appendix C: Sample list of information sheet and informed consent form for School

Information Sheet for School

1 Title of the research

How to raise 'hope' in young people from a moderate learning difficulties special school?

2 Researcher

Erin Cheong, Trainee Educational Psychologist, UCL Institute of Education.

3 Objective of the research

Hope programme is developed based on Snyder's hope theory. It has been found effective in promoting hopeful thought, self-worth and life satisfaction in children and young people. However, limited research has been conducted to understand its effectiveness in supporting the well-being of young people from a special school setting. Thus, this research aims to understand how the hope programme can be tailored to the needs and conceptualisation of this group of young people.

4 How the research will be conducted

This research has two phases: Phase 1 and 2. The selected students will participate in Phase 1 whilst their parents and the teachers will participate in Phase 2.

4.1 Phase 1: For Students

Duration:

The students will attend four sessions, with one session per week and approximately 45 - 60 minutes per session.

What will be involved?

Four students from this school will be invited to a group discussion, facilitated by me. During the discussion, the students will also be asked about the definition of some terms, e.g. 'hope', 'goals', 'plans' and 'motivation'. They will also be asked about how they achieve a goal. Some power point slides will also be presented, to support the students' understanding of the tasks.

4.2 Phase 2: For Parents

Duration:

The students' parents will be invited to a face-to-face individual interview with me, which will last for about 30 minutes.

What will be involved?

During the interview with parents, the Hope Theory and students' responses from Phase 1 will first be presented to them. They will then be invited to share their thoughts about what has been presented.

4.3 Phase 2: For Teachers

Duration:

The selected teachers will also be invited to take part in a group discussion, which will last for about 45 minutes.

What will be involved?

Similar to the interview with parents, the Hope Theory and students' responses from Phase 1 will first be presented to the teachers. They will then be invited to share their thoughts about what has been presented.

5 How will the information be recorded?

The group discussions and interviews will be audio-recorded for the purpose of data analysis. The audio-recording will be stored in an encrypted digital device. I will be the only person having access to this device. This audio-recording will be deleted as soon as it has been fully transcribed.

Some of the participants' responses may also be recorded on a template or booklet as notes. This is to be used to summarise and guide the process of group discussions and individual interviews. Some of the information might be shared in my report but it will be anonymised before sharing. The other will be disposed of as soon as it has been fully transcribed.

6 Anonymity

The findings of this study may be shared with my colleagues from the UCL Institute of Education, or other form of publication or presentation. However, all information provided will remain anonymous unless the participants specifically agree that they are happy for me to use their real name in this research. The name of the school will be anonymised to protect the confidentiality of the school and other participants.

7 Safeguarding Policy

The School's safeguarding policy will be followed. This will include reporting any safeguarding issues to the school designated safeguarding officers and deputies.

8 Right to refuse or withdraw

You may choose not to participate in this research if do not wish to. No adverse action will be taken against your school. If you choose to participate, your school will remain the right to stop participating at any time without giving a reason.

9 Benefits

The school's participation in this research is likely to help us develop an intervention programme, which could be used to specifically support the well-being of young people from an MLD special school. The framework developed will also be shared with the school, if you wish to. However, due to confidentiality, only group findings will be reported. Individual participant's responses will not be shared without permission. Apart from that, there will be no immediate or direct benefit to your school.

10 Contact details

If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at mei.cheong.14@ucl.ac.uk.

Thank you.

Informed consent form for school / head teacher

Please read the attached information sheet before completing this form.

- I have read and understood the information about the research, as provided in the Information Sheet.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions about the research and the School's involvement and role in it.
- I voluntarily agree for the School to be involved in this research.
- I understand that I can withdraw my permission at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that the findings may be shared with the colleagues of the researcher from the UCL Institute of Education, or other form of publication or presentation, but the name of the school will not be used.

Please tick box as appropriate:

- I **give** my consent for the School's involvement in this research.
- I **do not give** my consent for the School's involvement in this research.

Name of Head Teacher: _____

Signature: _____

Name of School: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Sample list of information sheet for parents/carers**Information Sheet****Dear Parent/Carer,**

My name is Erin Cheong. I'm a Trainee Educational Psychologist from UCL Institute of Education. I'm currently conducting my Doctorate Research at XXX Secondary School.

1 Title of the research

How to raise 'hope' in young people from a moderate learning difficulties special school?

2 Objective of the research

Hope programme is developed based on Snyder's hope theory. It has been found effective in promoting hopeful thought, self-worth and life satisfaction in children and young people. This programme has been found effective in promoting hopeful thought, subjective well-being and emotional well-being of children and young people. However, limited research has been conducted to understand its effectiveness in supporting the well-being of young people from a special school setting. Thus, this research aims to understand how a hope programme can be tailored to the needs and conceptualisation of this group of young people.

3 Benefits of the research

Your participation in this research is likely to help us develop an intervention programme, which could be used to specifically support the well-being of young people from an MLD special school. However, please note that there will have no direct benefit to you.

4 How the research will be conducted

This research has two phases: Phase 1 and 2. Your child will participate in Phase 1 whilst you will be in Phase 2.

4.1 Phase 1: For Students

Duration:

Your child will attend four sessions, with one session per week and approximately 45 – 60 minutes per session.

What will be involved?

Your child will be invited to a group discussion, together with three other students from the school. During the discussion, the students will also be asked about the definition of some terms, e.g. 'hope', 'goals', 'plans' and 'motivation'. They will also be asked about how they achieve a goal. Some power point slides will also be presented, to support the students' understanding of the tasks.

4.2 Phase 2: For Parents

Duration:

You will be invited to a face-to-face individual interview with me, either at the school or at your place, whichever that is convenient for you. The interview will last for about 30 minutes.

What will be involved?

During the group discussion, the Hope Theory and students' responses from Phase 1 will first be presented to you. You will then be invited to share your thoughts about what has been presented.

5 How will the information be recorded?

The discussion with you and your child will be audio-recorded for the purpose of data analysis. The audio-recording will be stored in an encrypted digital device. I will be the only person having access to this device. This audio-recording will be deleted as soon as our conversation has been fully transcribed.

Both your child and your responses will also be recorded on a paper or templates as notes. This is to be used to summarise and guide the process of our discussion. Some information on the templates may be used in the presentation of the research findings. However, it will be anonymised before any forms of presentation are conducted, e.g. sharing the findings with the school or my colleagues.

6 Anonymity

The findings of this study will be shared in this school as well as with my colleagues from the UCL Institute of Education. However, all information provided by you and/or your child will remain anonymous unless (a) it is related to safeguarding issues, in which the school safeguarding policy will apply, and/or (b) if you specifically agree that you are happy for us to use your and/or your child's real name in this research. Anything else that might mean someone else could identify you and/or your child will be removed from this research.

7 Safeguarding policy

If any safeguarding issues arise during the discussion with your child, in order to protect the safety of your child, the school safeguarding policy will be applied. This will include informing the school designated safeguarding officer and deputies, i.e. Ms XXX, Ms XXX and Ms XXX.

8 Your right to refuse or withdraw

You may choose not to participate in this research if do not or do not wish you child to. No adverse action will be taken against you or your child. If you choose to participate, you may stop your participation at any time, and/or choose not to answer any of my questions whenever you don't feel comfortable to, without giving a reason. You child will have the same right as yours.

9 Contact details

If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at mei.cheong.14@ucl.ac.uk.

Thank you.

Informed consent form for parents/carers

Please read the attached information sheet before completing this form.

- I have read and understood the information about the research, as provided in the Information Sheet.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions about the research and my participation.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in the research.
- I voluntarily agree for my child's participation in the research.
- I understand that I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason and I will not be penalised for withdrawing.
- I understand that the findings may be shared in the school of my child and with the colleagues of the researcher from the UCL Institute of Education, but both my child's and my names will not be used in the report or in any form of presentation of the research findings.
- I understand that the interview with my child and I will be audio-recorded but this will not be shared with anyone else apart from the researcher herself.

Please tick box as appropriate:

- I **wish** to participate in this research.
- I **do not wish** to participate in this research.
- I **give** my consent for my child's participation in this research.
- I **do not give** my consent for my child's participation in this research.

Name of Parent: _____ Signature: _____

Name of child: _____ Date: _____

Email: _____ Mobile: _____

Prefer to be contacted by: **Email / Mobile**

Appendix E: Sample list of information sheet for students

Information Sheet

Who am I?

- My name is Erin. I'm a Trainee Educational Psychologist.
- I work with children and young people to help them enjoy the school more, and maybe enjoy their life more.
- I'm also a student. I study at UCL Institute of Education



Why are we meeting up?

- I'm developing a programme for students from this school, called the hope programme.
- I need your help to develop this programme.



What is the programme about?

- The programme has helped people to feel more positive about life.

Why will you be invited?

- I want to develop a programme that is suitable for students from this school. I need your help!



What are we going to do?

- This project has two parts: Part 1 and 2. You will participate in Part 1 and your parents and some of your teachers will be in Part 2.

- You will have a group discussion with me and three other students from this school, they are
- We will talk about the meaning of 'hope', 'goals', 'plans' and 'motivation'.
- We will also talk about how you achieve goals.
- I will also show you some slides on the board, just to make myself clear.



For how long?

- There are 4 sessions in total.
- That means you need to see me four days in four different weeks.
- Each session takes about 45 minutes.

What will I do with our discussion?

- I will share it with your parents and some of your teachers, to ask what they think about what we said.
- I might also share it with my friends from my university.



Will anyone know what you shared?

- I will not use your name whilst sharing this information. This means that besides those in the room, no one else will know what you have said, unless you tell me that you want me to use your name.



- If what you shared made me worry about your safety, I will need to tell someone who can keep you safe. They are Ms XXX, Ms XXX or Ms XXX.
- I hope you could also respect everyone else in the room and not to share what others have said to anyone else outside of the room.



How will our discussion be recorded?

- Our discussion will be audio-recorded with my mobile, so that I can write down exactly what you have said and to work on it later.
- I will be the only person having access to this mobile and the recording will be deleted as soon as all our conversation has all been written down.



Do I have to take part?

- This is completely up to you.
- I have already asked your parent and the school. They have agreed.
- If you are happy to take part, you will need to sign at the last page of this form to show that you are clear about this project and are happy to take part.

What if I change my mind?

- You can change your mind about taking part at any time.
- You can also choose not to answer any of my questions whenever you don't feel comfortable to, without giving a reason.

- You will not be told off or punished for doing so. All you need to do is simply to let me know.

What will I get from taking part?

- You won't be getting anything from taking part.
- But your taking-part is important for us to find out how to help students in the school to feel good about future.
- This might be useful for you, if the school decides to use what we did, and it may help other students in future.

Questions?

- Do you have any question?
- If you have any questions later, you can talk to me before or after each session.
- Or you can send me an email on mei.cheong.14@ucl.ac.uk.



Thank you.

Informed consent form for students

Please make sure you understand the information in the front pages before completing this form.

- I have read and understood what the research is about.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions about the research and my participation.
- I'm happy to take part in the research.
- I understand that I can change my mind about taking part at any time without giving a reason, and I will not be told off or punished for this.
- I understand that our discussion may be shared in the school or with Erin's (the researcher) friends from her university, but my name will not be used.
- I understand that the sessions will be audio-recorded but only Erin has access to that.

Please tick box as appropriate:

- I **wish** to participate in this research.
- I **do not wish** to participate in this research.

Name of student: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Sample list of information sheet for Teachers

Information Sheet

Dear Teachers,

My name is Erin Cheong. I'm a Trainee Educational Psychologist from UCL Institute of Education. I'm currently conducting my Doctorate Research at XXX Secondary School.

1 Title of the research

How to raise 'hope' in young people from a moderate learning difficulties special school?

2 Objective of the research

Hope programme is developed based on Snyder's hope theory. It has been found effective in promoting hopeful thought, self-worth and life satisfaction in children and young people. However, limited research has been conducted to understand its effectiveness in supporting the well-being of young people from a special school setting. Thus, this research aims to understand how the hope programme can be tailored to the needs and conceptualisation of this group of young people.

3 Benefits of the research

There will have no direct benefit to you but your participation in this research is likely to help us develop an intervention programme, which could be used to specifically support the Post-School transition of young people from an MLD special school.

4 How the research will be conducted

This research has two phases: Phase 1 and 2. The students chosen from this school will participate in Phase 1 whilst your contribution is significant to Phase 2.

4.1 Phase 2: For Teachers

You are invited for a group discussion with me and your colleague. The discussion will last for about 45 – 60minutes.

What do you need to do?

During the group discussion, the Hope Theory and students' responses from Phase 1 will first be presented to you. You will then be invited to share your thoughts about what has been presented.

5 How will the information be recorded?

The group discussion will be audio-recorded for the purpose of data analysis. The audio-recording will be stored in an encrypted digital device. I will be the only person having access to this device. This audio-recording will be deleted as soon as our conversation has been fully transcribed.

Your responses may also be recorded on a booklet as notes. This is to be used to summarise and guide the process of our discussion and will be disposed of as soon as it has been fully transcribed.

6 Anonymity

The findings of this study may be shared in this school as well as with my colleagues from the UCL Institute of Education. However, all information provided by you will remain anonymous unless you specifically agree that you are happy for us to use your real name in this research. Anything else that might mean someone else could identify you will be removed from this research.

7 Your right to refuse or withdraw

You may choose not to participate in this research if do not wish to. No adverse action will be taken against you. If you choose to participate, you may stop your participation at any time, and/or choose not to answer any of my questions whenever you don't feel comfortable to, without giving a reason.

8 Contact details

If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at mei.cheong.14@ucl.ac.uk.

Thank you.

Informed consent form for Teachers

Please read the attached information sheet before completing this form.

- I have read and understood the information about the research, as provided in the Information Sheet.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions about the research and my participation.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in the research.
- I understand that I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason and I will not be penalised for withdrawing.
- I understand that the findings may be shared in the school or with the researcher's colleagues from the UCL Institute of Education, but my name will not be used in the report or in any form of presentation of the findings.
- I understand that the group interview will be audio-recorded but this will not be shared with anyone else apart from the researcher herself.

Please tick box as appropriate:

- I **wish** to participate in this research.
- I **do not wish** to participate in this research.

Name of participant: _____

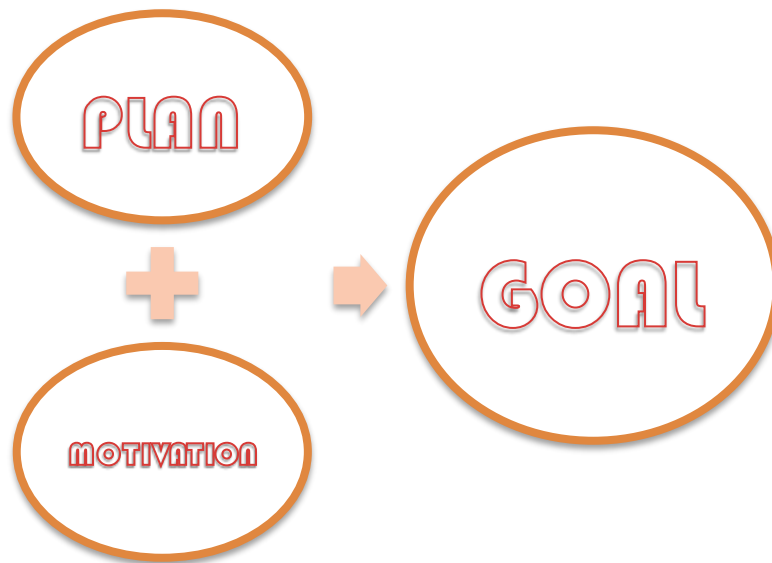
Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G: Sample list of the interview guide used in Phase 1 sessions

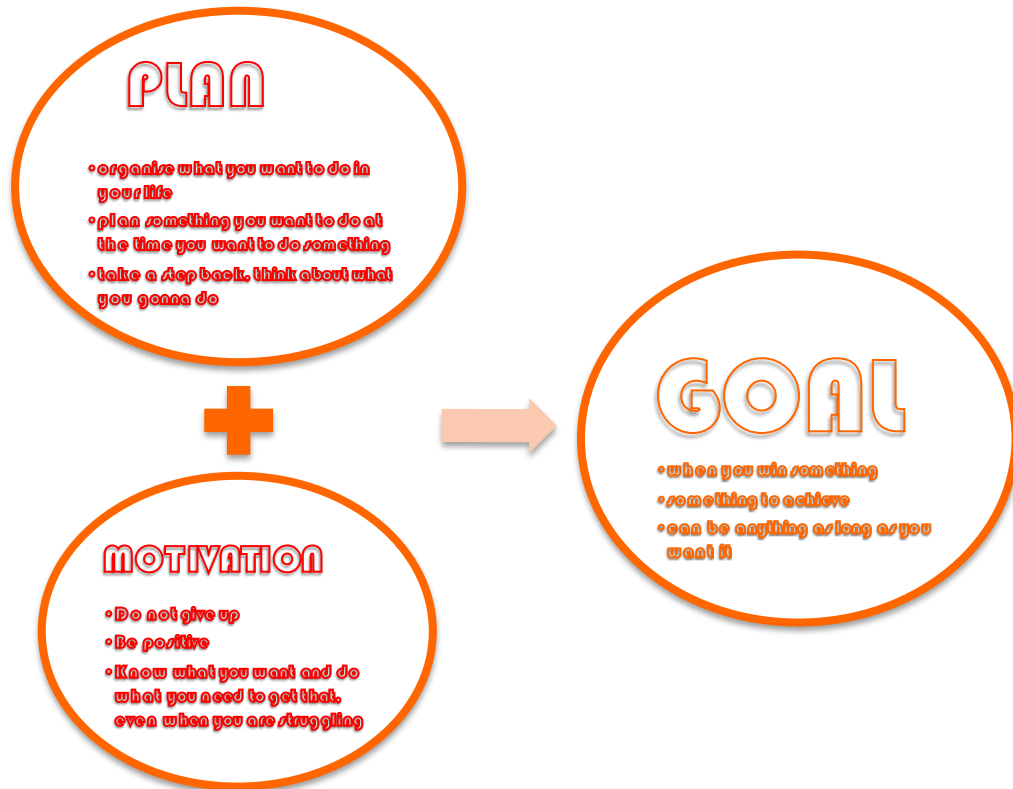
Session 1:

1. Before we start, just to remind you that it is very important for you to understand exactly what I say. So please feel free to let me know if anything I have said doesn't make sense to you or if you want me to repeat anything.
2. Can anyone tell me what does the word 'hope' mean to you?
3. What about 'goal'? What does a 'goal' mean? (Show the diagram in power point presenting only the term 'goal' as below)
4. Do you have a goal? What is it (or what is your goal for next year)? Take some time to think about your goal. You can either draw or write it on the paper. Let's have 5 minutes to do this and we will share this as a group.
5. (Show the diagram below and say) Someone said that in order to have hope. You need to first have a goal, be able to make a plan and have motivation.



6. What does 'plan' mean to you?
7. Using your 'goal' as an example, what is your plan for your goal?
8. What does 'motivation' mean to you?
 - a. So when it is tricky to reach your goal, what would you do so that you would keep moving forward?
9. So in summary, you said that 'goal' means... 'plan' means... 'motivation' means... am I right?

10. To include it into this diagram, it should look like this (show the diagram below).



11. Did I understand you correctly?

12. Would you agree or disagree with the diagram?

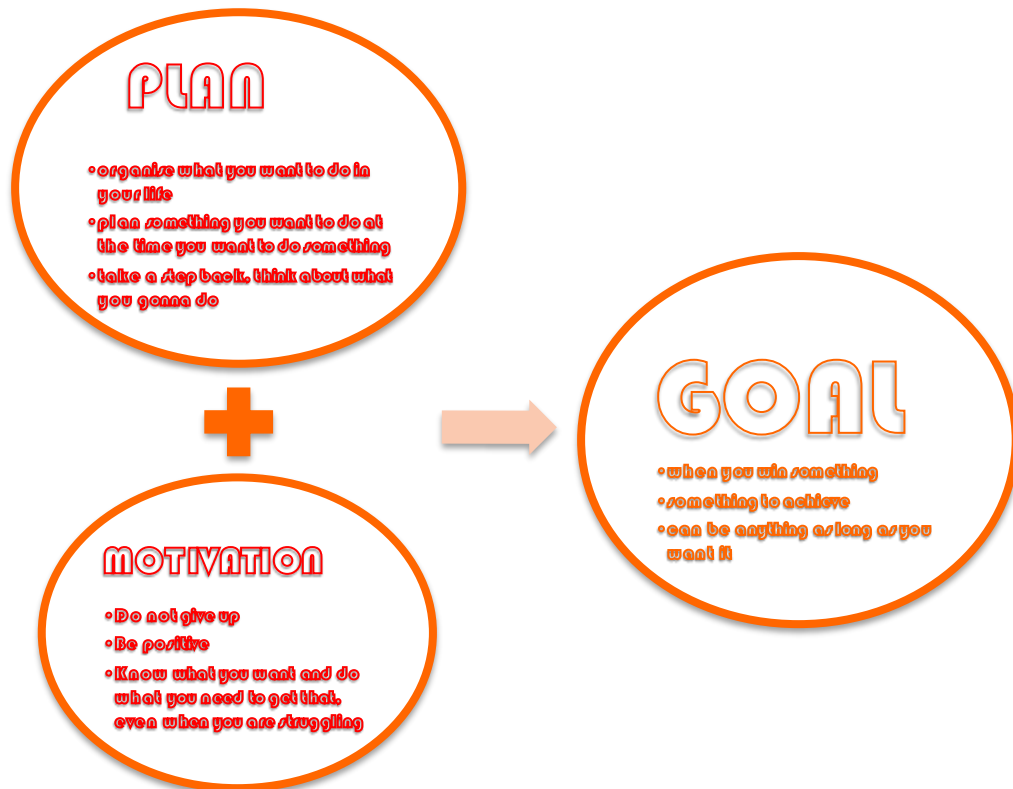
a. What do you agree with?

b. What do you disagree with?

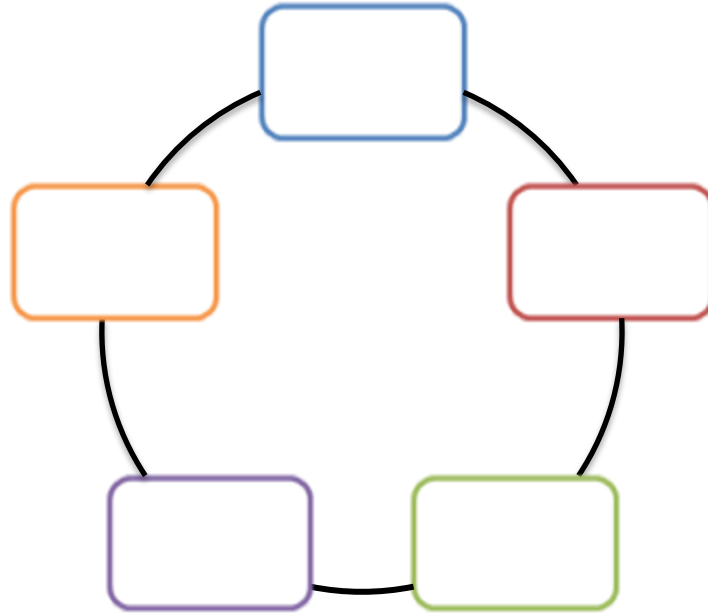
13. In the next session, we will have a bit more discussion about this diagram (the diagram above), and how you achieved a goal in the past.

Session 2:

1. Remember this diagram (show the diagram below)?



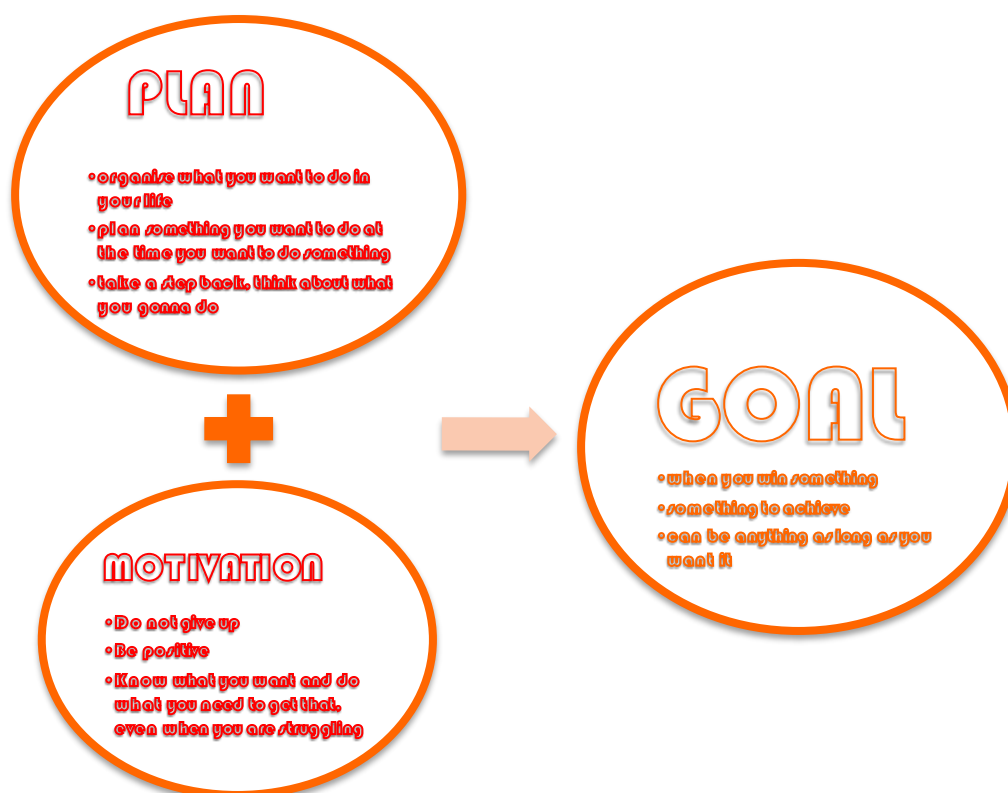
2. So in our last session, we spoke about the meaning of 'hope', 'goal', 'plan' and 'motivation'. Can anyone remind us what the diagram says?
3. Today we are going to share a goal we have achieved in the past, how we had planned to achieve the goal, and how we motivated ourselves to achieve the goal.
4. I want you to think about the biggest goal you have achieved last year. Write it down inside the circle of this paper here (present students with papers with the diagram below).



5. In those little boxes, tell me how you achieved the goal?
6. Let's have 10 minutes to think about it and we will share as a group.
7. Anyone would like to share first?
8. Use prompt questions when the students were sharing:
 - a. What was your plan?
 - b. How did you plan that?
 - c. Was your goal difficult to achieve?
 - d. What was difficult?
 - e. What did you do to overcome that (the difficulties)?
9. So next session, we will talk about how to help you achieve a goal.

Session 3:

1. (Show the students the diagram used in the last session with their responses on it) So last session we spoke about the biggest goal you have achieved in the past and how you achieved it.
2. Remember this idea of hope? Today, we are going to talk about what we need to include in a programme developed with this idea (show diagram below), to help you set a goal, make plans and to motivate yourselves.



3. Have you been in a situation where you have a goal, there is something that you want, but you think 'nah, I don't think I can do that' or 'nah, I don't know how to get that'?
4. Imagine you are now in that situation, what support do you think you'll need to help you get what you want?
5. (If the students have difficulties diversifying their responses)
I have some suggestions about what we can do, with ideas about how to help you achieve your goals, and to enjoy a programme like this, to help you out when you are stuck with your goal (show the suggestions in Table 6 which will first be cut into pieces before presenting them to the students).

Table 6

Approaches Used in a Hope Programme and the Therapeutic Adaptations Suggested By Past Research

Show you story about how successful people achieve their goals.
Have you to think and write about how you reached your goals in the past.
Share your successful stories with others.
Have you to show a photo about how you reached your goals in the past.
Work with adults you know and are comfortable with, e.g. teachers, teaching assistants or parents

Give you time and opportunities to imagine and practise what to do when things are getting harder

Use images, drawings or pictures to help you understand what have been said

Focus on what you are good at and have done well in, not what you can't do

Use short and simple sentences

Help you to set a goal that you want to get, not avoid

Teach you to spot your unhelpful thinking, e.g. "I can never do it"

Teach you to create more helpful thinking, e.g. "I can do it"

Help you to break down your goals

Help you to understand how the way you think can affect the way you feel and what you do

Set a goal based on what you like and want

6. Can you tell me which of these suggestions are helpful, which of these are not?
7. Place it on this cardboard if they are helpful, and in the box if they are not.
8. Take your time to think and discuss with each other.
9. Let me know if you need any help.
10. (If the students are uncertain about anything) If you are not sure about anything, just leave it aside and come back to it later.
11. (Once the students have sorted all the suggestions, ask) Why do you think it is helpful? Why do you think it is not?
12. So you think these are helpful..... and these are not.....?
13. Is there any other suggestions you would like to add?
 - a. If yes, what is it?
 - b. If no, end of session.

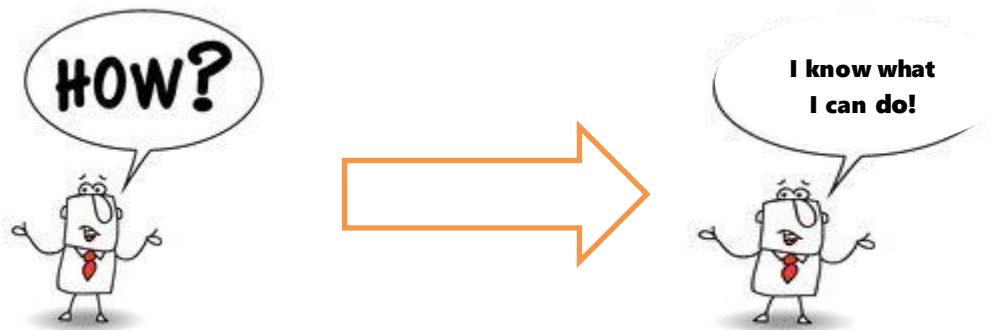
Session 4:

1. Write down the name of one of your friends from this school and is not here in this group.
2. If you are to explain the meaning of 'hope' to this friend. What would you say? Write it down on the same sheet of paper.
3. What about the meaning of 'goal'?
4. So previously we discussed that in order to achieve your goals, we need to have some plans. For example, some people said in order to be a football coach for children, he was helping out the coach in the school, see

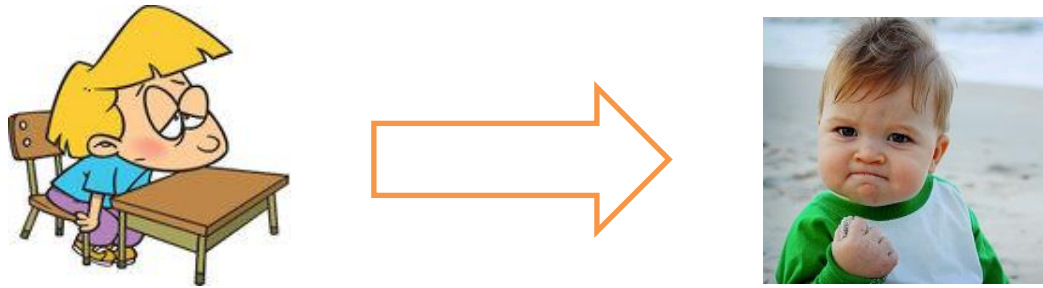
how he coaches the students and talk to him about how to be a football coach (explain using the diagram below). If you are to explain to your friend, what does 'plan' mean. What would you say?



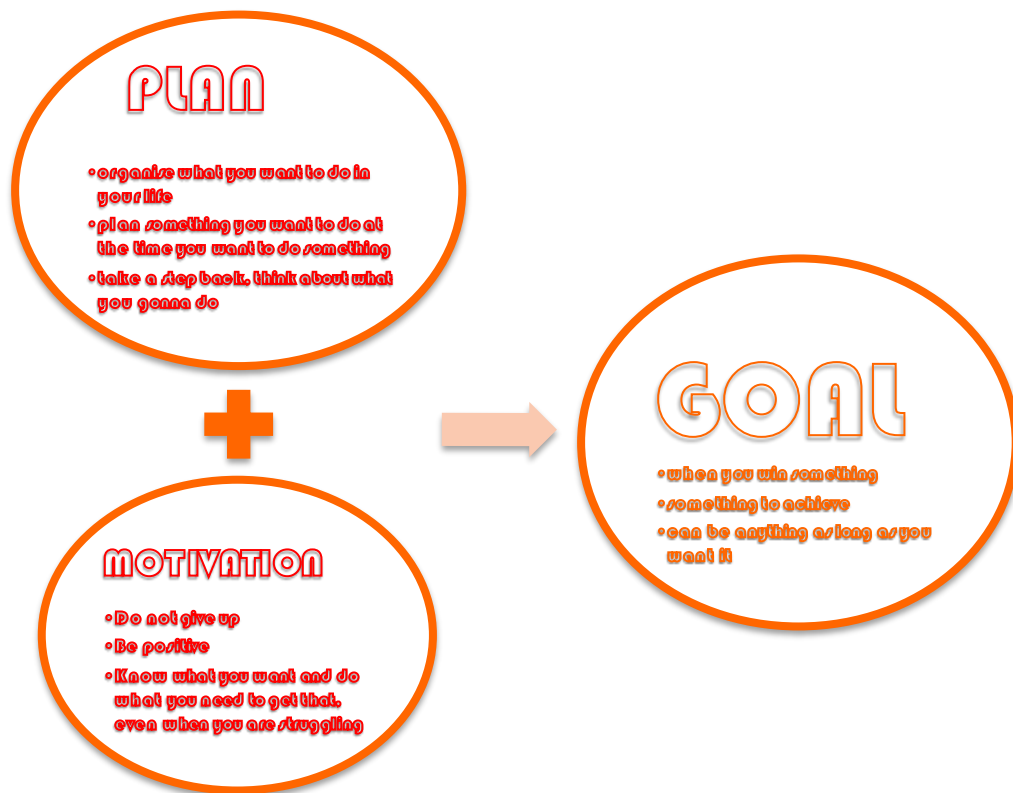
5. So imagine now this friend is stuck with achieving his/her goal. You are to help this friend makes good plans. What will you do so that your friend will start thinking "I know what I can do"? (show diagram below)



6. Previously we have discussed that besides making plans, we also need to be able to motivate ourselves to achieve a goal. If you are to describe to your friends what 'motivation' means. What would you say? Write it down on the same piece of paper.
7. Imagine now your friend is stuck again, s/he doesn't think s/he can reach his/her goals. What would you do to help motivate him/her? (show diagram below)



8. Remember this diagram? (show the diagram below)



9. So we said in order to have hope, we need to have a goal, have a plan and have motivation.
10. If we are going to develop a programme using this idea, to help your friends make plans, motivate themselves, and to achieve a goal. What do you think they would learn after joining this programme?
11. What will interest your friend to join?
12. What might make your friend not interested to join?
13. Imagine now you have learnt all those skills you need to achieve your goal, you have learnt to make plans, you have learnt to motivate yourself, how would that make you feel?

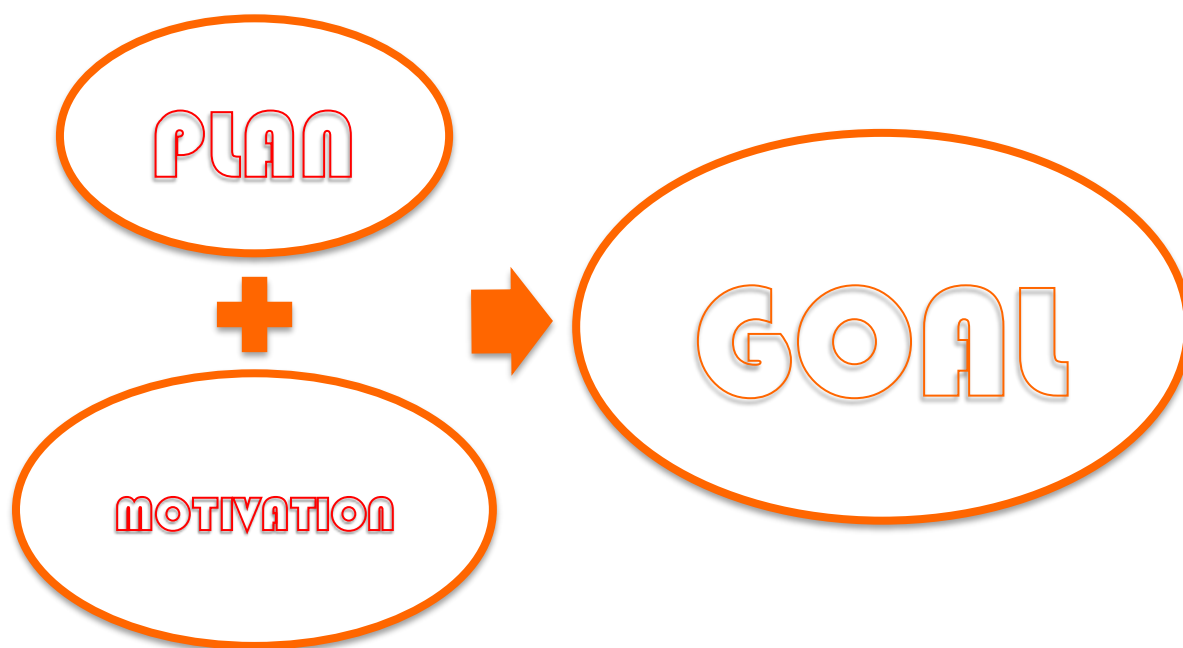
Appendix H: Sample list of the interview guide used in Phase 2 for teachers

1. There is a recent trend and obligation that have been put on professionals working with children and young people, particularly those with SEND, in terms of gathering and listening to the pupils' voices when it comes making a decision that may have an impact on them, such as their career, life goals and targets, the intervention they receive, etc. We call it the 'person-centred' approach.
2. If you could, think of a student that you are currently working very closely with.
 - a. What is most challenging when it comes to understanding the student's thoughts about his/her future?
 - b. What did you do so that you can better able to access his/her voice?
 - c. Reflecting upon what you have done, will you do anything differently?

Hope Theory:

3. As indicated earlier, my main objective is to understand how to promote hope in students from this school.
4. According to Snyder, the researcher who developed Hope Theory, hope sparks when one has a goal that s/he wants to achieve in life, is confident with own problem-solving skills to reach the goal, which basically means making plans, and is able to self-motivate (show the diagram below).
5. Using this theory, some practitioners have developed hope programmes to support students be more hopeful, by helping them to set a goal, to make plans and to motivate themselves.
6. However, this model is a very flexible model and it has not been used with students of MLD special schools. We all need to feel hopeful, especially these students when life can be challenging for them. So I would like to understand how relevant and significant a programme like this can be to students from an MLD school, and how might it be applied to them.

Hope =



7. As you are aware, in order to help the students to set a goal, it is important to access their voices, about what they want. So your previous views about the person-centred approach are significant to my research.
8. In order to understand how the hope programme can best be applied to the students, I have also met with some of your students previously to shed light on this.
9. I have met the students in four occasions, or four sessions. The table presenting to you (below) illustrated what we did in each session. (Brief each session using the table below).

Session 1	Students explained the terms: Hope, Goal, Plan, Motivation. Students shared a future goal they would like to achieve, and how they planned to achieve the goal.
Session 2	Students shared a goal they have achieved in the past, and how they achieved it.
Session 3	Students discussed approaches to be taken in a hope programme, using some of the examples taken from past research.
Session 4	Students imagined themselves as a facilitator, explaining the

	terms above to a friend, and how they would support a friend to reach his/her goals.
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10. The table presenting to you (below) provides you with some of the students' responses about how they defined the terms. I will let you have a quick look.


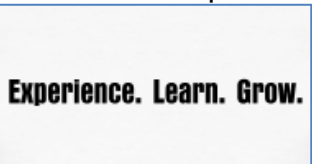




Term	Students' explanation
Hope	<p>"Believe that you can accomplish something."</p> <p>"Happiness... because it makes me feel good."</p> <p>"... being positive about the future and believe that one day you can get what you want."</p>
Goal	<p>"Something you want to achieve"</p> <p>"do whatever you want in your life"</p> <p>"goal means to do something you have to keep working towards and never give up."</p>
Plan	<p>"It means organise what you want to do in your life"</p> <p>"when you (want to) achieve a goal, you gonna take a step back, you gonna think about what you gonna do."</p> <p>"A plan to me means like... you've gotta plan something for your future goals... what you want to get in the future, you plan it and then you do it, and just follow it."</p>
Motivation	<p>"accomplishment, be strong and be assertive at all aspects of life"</p> <p>"you gonna be strict to yourself"</p> <p>"to not let anyone try and say that you can't. Keep calm and try to work hard for your goals"</p>




11. This table (Table 7 as illustrated below) presents you with the students' suggested hope approaches, aiming to provide you with an idea of the approaches that the students think might help them and students from this school to make plans, motivate themselves, achieve their goals, and to develop hopeful thinking. It also included approaches that could help them engage in a hope programme.

12. Some of the approaches were quoted with students' responses from Phase 1, to give you a better idea of what they have said.

Table 7
Summary of the Students' Proposed 'Hope Approaches'.

* Please note that 'you' in the table below refers to the **students**.

Categories	Approaches
1. Strategies to Promote Positive Thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach you to spot your negative thinking, e.g. "I can never do it" • Teach you to create more positive thinking, e.g. "I can do it" • Help you to understand how the way you think can affect the way you feel and what you do.
2. Learn from Experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you to think and write about how you reached your goals in the past • Have you to show a photo about how you reached your goals in the past. • Show you story about how successful people achieve their goals.
3. Setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comfortable, calming and relaxing environment • Conduct in a spacious room • A room that is not crowded. <p><i>"..... like for XX (a friend), when people are around him, too close, he doesn't feel comfortable, and he will move away. And when it is crowded, he doesn't like crowded rooms..... he will get sweaty and nervous. And it will be hard to open his mouth."</i></p>
4. Reinforce Understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use visual support, e.g. images, drawings or pictures, to help you understand what have been said. • Use short and simple sentences.
5. Practising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give you time and opportunities to imagine and practise what to do when things are getting harder.
6. Make It Personal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a goal based on what you like and want. • Share your successful stories with others.
7. Help To Set Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help you to set a goal that you want to get, not avoid.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help you to break down your goals.
<p>8. Be Positive</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comforting you by normalising the struggles / challenges you experience. <p><i>"..... go up to him and tell him that it is okay, a lot of people struggles but it's okay."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on what you are good at and have done well in, not what you can't do.
<p>9. Social Support</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with adults whom you are familiar and comfortable with, e.g. teachers, teaching assistants or parents • Opportunities to talk to and engage with familiar adults. <p><i>"so XX, our football coach, he was the one who inspired me (to be a football coach). He said I've got the talent and he spoke to my mum. So I asked him how to be a football coach....."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working collaboratively with peers. <p><i>"So I wrote down how me and XX [a friend] have planned to start recording music and writing songs..... we will just get our papers out and write about the plans. Like he wants to be a musician, and I will be able to help him to, you know, write the songs, the rhythms and lyrics, and I'm teaching him how to. So we've got our own jobs, I will just be a helping hand, help him to write the songs."</i></p>

13. Please do not take this as an absolute guidance. The idea of this interview is for me to understand the feasibility of the theory and the students' suggested hope approaches. So after you have finished reading it, you will be asked to share your thoughts about the approaches.

14. I will give you 5 minutes to have a look.

15. What are your thoughts about what have been presented so far?

- How relevant do you think it is to develop a hope programme using these approaches with students of this school?

16. Is there anything about the approaches that has surprised you?

- Is there anything you would like to add or amend?

- b. If yes, what is it?
- c. If no, next question.

17. Do you think there is a role involved for parents?

18. From your experience, is there anything that you think should be brought up but haven't been discussed?

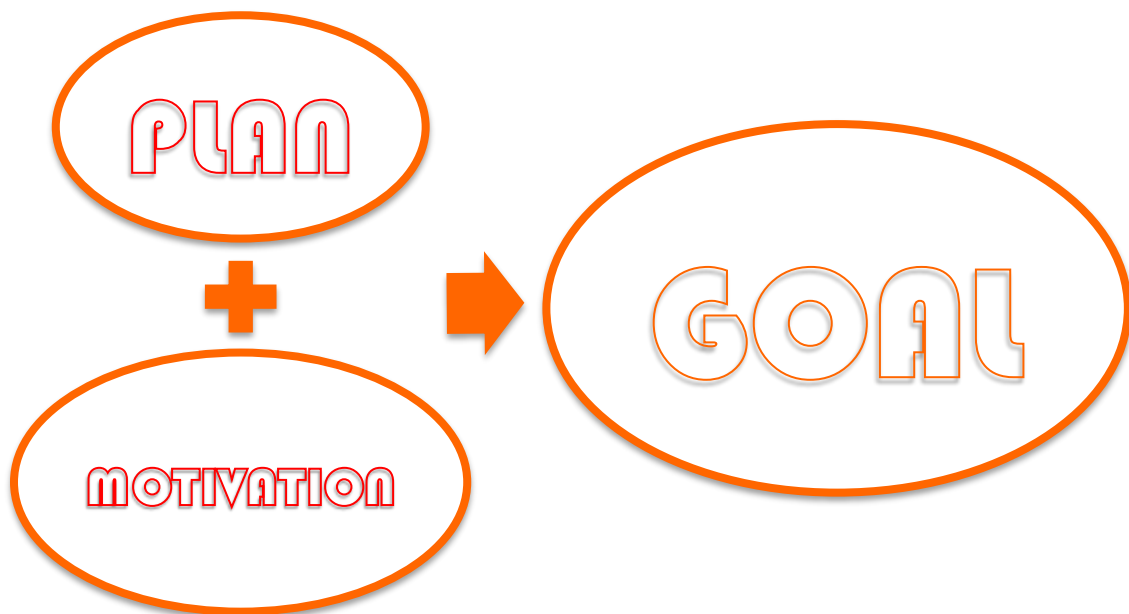
Appendix I: Sample list of the interview guide used in Phase 2 for parents

1. Has your child mentioned anything to you about what we did before?

Hope Theory:

2. The purpose of my work is to understand how to help students to be more hopeful.
3. According to Snyder, the person who developed the hope theory, in order to have hope, we need to first have a goal, be able to make plans for our goals, and be able to motivate ourselves (show the diagram below).

Hope =



4. There are programmes using this hope theory to help students to be more hopeful, by supporting them to set goals, make plans, and to self-motivate. However, little was done with students from a special school. So I wanted to know how programmes like this could work for these students.
5. So I met with your child previously, together with some of his/her friends, to help me understand how to use a hope programme with them.
6. I have met with them in four sessions (show the table below).

Session 1	Students explained the terms: Hope, Goal, Plan, Motivation. Students shared a future goal they would like to achieve, and how they planned to achieve the goal.
Session 2	Students shared a goal they have achieved in the past, and how they achieved it.
Session 3	Students discussed approaches to be taken in a hope programme, using some of the examples taken from past research.
Session 4	Students imagined themselves as a facilitator, explaining the terms above to a friend, and how they would support a friend to reach his/her goals.



7. In session 1, I asked the students about the meaning of Hope, Goal, Plan, and Motivation. Then, I asked them to share a future goal and how they plan of achieving the goal.
8. In session 2, they shared their past experiences of how they achieved a goal.
9. In session 3, I asked the students to tell me what can be done to help them engage in a hope programme, to help them make plans, self-motivate and to reach their goals.
10. In session 4, I asked them to write down the name of a friend from the school, and tell me how they would explain those terms above to this friend, and how they would help this friend to reach his/her goal.
11. This table (below) shows you some of the students' responses about their understanding of the terms used in hope theory, including 'hope', 'goal', 'plan' and 'motivation'. I will let you have a quick look.







Term	Students' explanation
Hope	<p>"Believe that you can accomplish something."</p> <p>"Happiness... because it makes me feel good."</p> <p>"... being positive about the future and believe that one day you can get what you want."</p>
Goal	<p>"Something you want to achieve"</p> <p>"do whatever you want in your life"</p> <p>"goal means to do something you have to keep working towards and never give up."</p>
Plan	"It means organise what you want to do in your life"

	<p>“when you (want to) achieve a goal, you gonna take a step back, you gonna think about what you gonna do.”</p> <p>“A plan to me means like... you’ve gotta plan something for your future goals... what you want to get in the future, you plan it and then you do it, and just follow it.”</p>
Motivation	<p>“accomplishment, be strong and be assertive at all aspects of life”</p> <p>“you gonna be strict to yourself”</p> <p>“to not let anyone try and say that you can’t. Keep calm and try to work hard for your goals”</p>

12. This table (below) shows you what the students think can help them to achieve a goal, make plans, and to self-motivate. It also include responses about how to help them engage better in a hope programme.
13. Some of them are quoted using the students’ responses, to give you a better idea of what they have said.
14. So we have the first one here strategies to support their positive thinking, such as teach them to spot those negative thinking and to create more positive ones; the second one learn from past experience, including their successful experience and those of others.....

* Please note that ‘**you**’ in the table below refers to the **students**.

Categories	Approaches
<p>10. Strategies to Promote Positive Thinking</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach you to spot your negative thinking, e.g. “I can never do it” • Teach you to create more positive thinking, e.g. “I can do it” • Help you to understand how the way you think can affect the way you feel and what you do.
<p>11. Learn from Experience</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you to think and write about how you reached your goals in the past • Have you to show a photo about how you reached your goals in the past. • Show you story about how successful people achieve their goals.
12. Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comfortable, calming and relaxing environment • Conduct in a spacious room • A room that is not crowded.

	<p><i>"..... like for XX (a friend), when people are around him, too close, he doesn't feel comfortable, and he will move away. And when it is crowded, he doesn't like crowded rooms..... he will get sweaty and nervous. And it will be hard to open his mouth."</i></p>
<p>13. Reinforce Understanding</p> <p>make it clear</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use visual support, e.g. images, drawings or pictures, to help you understand what have been said. • Use short and simple sentences.
<p>14. Practising</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give you time and opportunities to imagine and practise what to do when things are getting harder.
<p>15. Make It Personal</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a goal based on what you like and want. • Share your successful stories with others.
<p>16. Help To Set Goals</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help you to set a goal that you want to get, not avoid. • Help you to break down your goals.
<p>17. Be Positive</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comforting you by normalising the struggles / challenges you experience. <p><i>"..... go up to him and tell him that it is okay, a lot of people struggles but it's okay."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on what you are good at and have done well in, not what you can't do.
<p>18. Social Support</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with adults whom you are familiar and comfortable with, e.g. teachers, teaching assistants or parents • Opportunities to talk to and engage with familiar adults. <p><i>"so XX, our football coach, he was the one who inspired me (to be a football coach). He said I've got the talent and he spoke to my mum. So I asked him how to be a football coach....."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working collaboratively with peers.

	<p><i>"So I wrote down how me and XX [a friend] have planned to start recording music and writing songs..... we will just get our papers out and write about the plans. Like he wants to be a musician, and I will be able to help him to, you know, write the songs, the rhythms and lyrics, and I'm teaching him how to. So we've got our own jobs, I will just be a helping hand, help him to write the songs."</i></p>
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15. What do you think about what we have talked about so far?
 - a. Do you think a hope programme, using the approaches here (point to the table above), can be made useful for your child? What makes you think so?
16. If this programme has been developed, using these approaches here (point to the table above), what would your child like about it?
17. What might your child not like about the programme?
18. Do you see yourself having a role in the programme?
 - a. If yes, what will you do to help the students in the programme?
 - b. If no, next question.
19. Is there anything else that you think we should talk about?
 - c. If yes, what is it?
 - d. If no, end of interview.

Appendix J: Sample list of procedure and statements for the Line-up Game**Procedure:**

1. The students will take turn to be the caller.
2. The caller will call out “Everyone please now line up...” and fill in the blank with a statement, e.g. “by height, shortest first”; the statement should not be repeated. See below for sample list of statements.
3. All students, including the caller, are then to find the correct sequence and raise their hands as they have done.
4. After a few trials, a nonverbal Line-up Game will then be introduced, i.e. the students are only allowed to communicate with gestures.

Sample list of statements:

- Everyone please now line up in the alphabet order of your first names
- Everyone please now line up by height, shortest first
- Everyone please now line up according to your birthdays – first in the year goes first
- Everyone please now line up according to the colour of your top, in alphabetical order
- Everyone please now line up according to the thickness of your hair, i.e. least hair at the front, most hair at the back

Appendix K: Sample lists of examples for initial coding

Phase 1:

	Responses	Initial Codes
Me	Alright! We are gonna start, today's session. You need to tell me the meaning of something. Tell me the meaning of hope, what does the word 'hope' mean to you?	
Amy	It's your belief.	Belief
Me	Belief? Believe in what?	
Ben	Believe that you can accomplish something.	Believing in one's capacity to achieve a goal
Amy	Yea	
Me	Ok. Cat, what does hope mean to you?	
Cat	Happiness	Bringing positive feelings
Me	Happiness? Hope means happiness to you?	
Cat	Ya.. because it makes me feel good	Bringing positive feelings
Ben	And positive.	
Me	So having hope makes you feel good and positive? Is that right?	
All	Yea	
Me	Alright! Tell me the meaning of goal, what does 'goal' mean to you?	
Amy	When you win something.	Goal is an achievement
Ben	Something you want to achieve.	Achievement
Cat	A goal means anything.. like.. if you want a job, if you want a dream job, it can.. it can be a goal	Flexible in nature
		Career focussed
Me	So it can be anything, as long as you want it?	Personal desire / wish
Cat	Ya	
Me	Is that what you mean?	
Cat	Ya	
Me	So what is your goal? I've got a paper here for each one of you, you can either write it down or draw a picture of it on the paper about your goal. I give you five minutes, take your time to think properly and work it on the paper.	
When the students have finished...		

Me	Alright, let's share!	
Ben	Be positive, and have a happy life, (have) motivation and family, being a friend of someone who has your back at all times	Positive sense of self
Me	Your goals are very deep, and very positive as well, very good. Anyone else?	
Amy	My goal is to have a weekend job, and have my own job as a nursery nurse in a hospital	Career focussed
Me	You must be a kind person.	
Cat	my goal is to be a film maker, and then playing games.	Career focussed Leisure activities
Me	Film maker? What kind of film will you make?	
Cat	Err.. I don't know.. Any..	
Me	Is that animation or real life programme or film	
Cat	I will say animation	
Me	Ok.. Alright.. So some people say that in order to have hope, to be hopeful, you need to first have a goal, be able to make plans to achieve your goals and have motivation. What does plan mean to you?	
Ben	Plan means that you plan something you want to do.. At the time you want to do something	Goal-oriented Action-based
Me	Mmhmm.. Anyone else? Amy, what do you think?	
Amy	It means you organise what you want to do to achieve your goal.	Goal-oriented Action-based Identify a way to reach a goal
Me	Very good	
Cat	When you (want to) achieve your goal, you gonna take a step back, you gonna think about what you gonna do.	Reflection – to identify a way to reach a goal
Me	Ok. So using your goal as an example, at the back of your paper, could you write down your plan to reach your goals.	
Ben	Plan?	
Me	Ya	
Students writing.....		
Me	Alright. Who wants to share?	

Cat	my plan for my goal is to do well in school or college, and my second plan is to not let anyone to take my goal or dream away.	Academic-based Consists of various tasks Defending one's goal
Me	So do well in school or college, and not to let anyone to take your goal away from you	
Ben	So you've gotta have a lock on it.. And you've got a key.. Have you got a key? What are you gonna do with your key?	
All	(Laugh)	
Me	So how do you make sure that you are doing well at school?	
Cat	Getting good results	Academic-based
Ben	Working really hard	
Me	Amy how about you?	
Amy	My plan is to work hard in life, and maybe be a TA to help out with other kids. (<i>wanted to be a nursery nurse</i>)	Goal-oriented Consists of various tasks
Me	Ben?	
Ben	I wrote here my goal is to be a football coach.	Career focussed
Me	Ok. And what's your plan?	
Ben	so... Xx, our football coach, he said i've got the talent and he spoke to my mum. So i asked him how to be a football coach, and he said i need to help him with coaching, watch him coach, and it really inspired me... How he shared his story with the students, and pushed them to have good attitudes and be motivated	Familiar adult to help set goal Engage with familiar adults Adult helps set plans
Me	So your plans are asking your coach about how to be a football coach, and helping your coach and watch how he coach?	Adult sharing experiences and skills
Ben	Yea...	Adult as a role model
Me	So how about motivation? What's the meaning of motivation to you?	
Amy	Accomplishment, be strong and be assertive at all aspects of life.	Achievement Positive sense of self
Me	Ok.	
Cat	Motivation to me.. It's like.. Arrghh.. It kind of came out of my mind	
Me	So when I say to motivate yourself, what	

	does that mean?	
Ben	You gonna be strict to yourself	Motivation = Self-management
Me	Be strict to yourself? How do you be strict to yourself?	
Ben	by thinking about what you need to achieve, what goals that need to be done. So you have gotta do that, do what you gotta do, then get into (a) college.. And then when you think about it, what you did, you will be proud of yourself	Positive attitudes – Focus on goals Positive attitudes – Focus on action plans Brings positive sense of self
Me	Very good. How about you Cat?	
Cat	He (ben) has stolen my idea.	
Ben	I know too much	
Me	So how do you motivate yourself to achieve the goals that you set for yourself? So some of you say your goals are to be a football coach, to be a good friend, to have motivation, to have successful mind thinking, some of you say that you will have a job as a nursery nurse in a hospital, some of you say you will be a filmmaker.. So when things are getting trickier, how do you motivate yourself to make sure you are working towards those goals?	
Ben	so for example, if you was (were) a footballer, and you play for a team, and you earn a lot of money, this is what people say to you, they say, to motivate yourself, you have to persuade yourself, and to become what you want to become, and you will be successful. Sometimes you won't be successful, but then you need to think about what you need to do. If you don't think about it, you are not going to get nowhere. You just need to be hard a bit to yourself. Sometimes there can be struggles, and sometimes.. They can't.	Self-management brings success Positive attitudes – Focus on one's goal Self-management Persistence – confront and overcome challenges
Me	So if there are struggles...	
Ben	you made the bad choices, and you can make bad choices, and (but) you need to be positive as well, to yourself.. Even there are struggles, just keep pushing yourself.	Positive mindset – To oneself
Me	Very good, a very clear explanation as well.	

	What do you all think (turn to other students)? Amy, what do you think... About what motivation means?	
Amy	Err.. Be strong..	Positive attitude
Ben	Don't be negative	Positive mindset
Me	Ok. What do you think Cat?	
Cat	I just lost my idea.	
Ben	Come on cat.	
Cat	I had it in my head..	
Me	Is it similar to what they said or is it quite different?	
Cat	Err.. It's similar	
Me	Mhmm.. What word have you got (to describe)?	
Cat	Nothing	
Me	Ok. So in summary, you said that 'goal' means "when you win something, something you want to achieve, and that it can be anything as long as you want it", 'plan' means "organise what you want to do in your life, something that happen at the time you want to do something, take a step back when you want to achieve a goal, to think about what you gonna do". Is that right?	
All	Yea	
Me	And motivation means do not give up, be positive and know what you want and focus on what you need to do to get that, even when you are struggling. Is that right?	
All	Yea	
Me	So what do you think about this diagram, this idea of hope saying that you need to have goals, be able to make plans and have self-motivation to be hopeful? Would you agree or disagree?	
Ben	Yea, i would agree strongly.	
Me	You would agree strongly.. So you think being able to make plans and to motivate yourself will help you reach your goal and bring you hope?	
Ben	Yea, cause if it is something you wanna do, you don't want to put yourself down, You need to be proud about yourself.	Positive about oneself
Cat	Oh, stop stealing my ideas	
Me	How about you Amy? Do you have anything to add?	

Amy	What? No	
Me	So you agree with Ben?	
Amy	Yea.	
Me	Ok. That's it! Ok so that's all for today. So next session we are gonna have a lot more discussion about this diagram, and you will share a goal you have achieved in the past.	

Phase 2

	Responses	Initial codes
Me	So the person-centred approach, I'm not sure if you are familiar with this word?	
Eric	Yes	
Me	So basically it means accessing pupils' voices when making a decision that is important to them, that can have an impact on them, which is an obligation put on professionals working with students with SEND. So if you could think of a student, whom you are currently working very closely with, what is most challenging when you are trying to access their voices?	<p><u>Sharing in a group</u></p> <p>Adult support – prompting</p> <p>Group sharing is challenging</p> <p>Group dynamic is important</p> <p>Adult support - encouragement</p> <p>Challenge – self-consciousness</p>
Eric	If it is in a group situation, initially it can be, you know you have to give them a bit of a 'kick' to be able to speak up, depending on the group and the dynamic. So sometimes they need encouragement to start thinking and to be aware, especially at this age, you know, saying the right thing.. they are quite guarded maybe a little bit, sometimes that can be.. initially..	
Me	Ok. When you say need to give them a 'kick', what does it mean?	
Eric	It just means initially, to really kind of... get them... get them, get them to speak... because it could be...	

	either your questions are not interesting to them, or it could be... too personal. So they feel like "I want to say something" but maybe not in a group.	Challenge – types of question
Me	Ok, so in a group it can be quite tricky..	<u>Setting a 'true' future goal</u>
Faye	It can be... I think what it is about these children is the idea of 'future', is quite abstract... is too far away. Their mind set is mainly about.. where they are at right now. And so therefore the challenge is to try and draw out some of the views of themselves (about the future). So I'm thinking of S for instance, so "what do you want to do in future" so she has a sort of a script in her head that that is one thing, and then it became something else. And actually she finds it quite hard when thinking about the future, she will just say what's happening right now, and that will be the scripts she has in her head, so that could be challenging.	<p>Challenge – abstract concept of 'future'</p> <p>Challenge – not able to 'visualise' a future role of themselves</p> <p>Challenge – lacking flexible thinking</p> <p>Challenge - Doesn't have a consistent goal</p> <p>Challenge – not able to 'visualise' a future role of themselves</p>
Eric	Yea, so of course... so what we have is from 'now' and then 'next' on Makaton, we've got for some of the children we have, to help them think about what we do now and next, like 'now' we do Maths, 'next' we do PE.	Support - Visual aids – first support understanding of time
Me	So the understanding of 'time' can still be quite challenging for them?	Challenge - Lacking understanding of time – affects understanding of future
Eric	Yes, which makes the term 'future' being quite abstract for them	
Faye	Yea, I think it can be for most autistic children... and some other children too. For S, I think those is... she will say I don't know, and then she will say childcare or something or yesterday I was asking "is there anything else that you could see yourself doing?"	Challenge – hard to identify a true future goal

	<p>"Can we have a think about...?" anyway, she came out with the idea of pharmaceutical, she was researching that a bit, but it took quite a while to get her to think about herself in a different context, to get her brain.. to evolve from this.</p>	<p>Challenge – Lacking flexible thinking</p>
Me	Ok. What did you do to help her think about...	
Faye	<p>I had to change the subject, and then I had to come back again. So I draw her away, and talk about something else, and then just sort of come back in with "how about this?" "No no" "how about this, medical?".</p>	<p>Adult support – Shift attention</p> <p>Adult support – Make options (of goals) explicit</p>
Eric	<p>Actually... yea, something just came to my mind. for any children, mainstream even, it is hard to think about the future. With autistic children, especially, because adults we have experience and hindsight and actually the question is... should... it be the expectation for a child 15/16... they know their career path, as it is.. that I don't think it's feasible for everybody. But you know we could give them more general advice, we could say, well, you, in school, you know the things that you do in school, the learning that you do in school, will help you in the future, whatever you do, sort of things, and your ideas may change over the years as with lots of adults. J, did you know what you wanted to do when you were 15? I wanted to be a computer programmer... that lasted a year.</p>	<p>Setting goal - challenging for students in general</p> <p>Challenge - Lacking experience</p> <p>Adult support – Using school curriculum</p> <p>Adult support - Normalising the changing of mind about future</p>
Faye	I mean I have an 18 year old at the moment who doesn't know quite well about the future... so you are absolutely right!	

Eric	Yea, especially these children. So don't get me wrong, some children they might have (a plan for the future) and would work towards their goals. But most, their views about their future and education, and moving on and transition, is something that they are not really in control of, it's just something that happens to them.	Need support for transition – Lacking agency over future
Me	Yea, I do agree even in mainstream schools, lots of students may not know yet what they want to do in future.	
Faye	Some of them.. is also the expectations and also, some are quite unrealistic. So for instance, another student that we have, he has decided to be a science teacher. He's fixated on it, with the idea of doing this, and the qualifications and everything.. so just talking around what that would entail, and having kind of a realistic expectation really	Challenge – setting a 'realistic' goal Challenge – Lacking flexible thinking Challenge – Difficulties envisioning the difficulties
Eric	Realistic.. for our children?	
Faye	Yea, exactly. So it was about trying to think about some areas around that... he was very fixated on it you know, and specifically want to do that (a science teacher). So when I say "let's have a look at the qualifications you need" and "how do you feel about that?" (the students responded) "Yup, that's fine!", you know..	Challenge – Difficulties envisioning the difficulties
Eric	He is quite unusual though, isn't it? He is quite stubborn.	
Faye	Yes, extremely stubborn. So that's the challenge... actually.	
Me	So identifying a realistic goal, can be challenging for the students?	
Eric	Yea, you know we need to give hope to these pupils as well... so that they feel they can do it, but maybe in a different... you know	Students need hope

	you would say “you can do something in that field maybe”, so it has got to be something, somewhere	Support – sensibly reframing the goal
Faye	Yea, so how can we think about that, you know if it's not what it can be, we might need to take care of some of those... feelings...	sensitively redirecting the students to a more realistic goal
Eric	Yea, is that ok?	
Me	Yea... so reflecting on what you have done already, about helping the students to think about their future goals, would you do anything differently?	
Eric	Well, the curriculum is very packed, especially Year 11, it does become quite intense cause we've got course work, work experience, applying for colleges for those accounts, and it would be nice to incorporate some of your ideas into what we are doing, so that 'Philosophy for Children' that I think possibly, will be a very great valuation to have a 'Philosophy for Children' session for our year 11 students especially to look into the future, it could be the word 'hope' the word 'future' or an image that tells them about 'transition', 'change' or 'big change'... getting them to face it, getting them to arrive at the idea of 'transition' as well... and also giving them encouragement and hope that things will change and they may eventually leave the school but they will still have their family and some friends that, if they want to keep in contact with.. I mean just try to 'cushion', try to cushion therefore when they leave, it.. is quite intense.. sometimes I think we could give more, we could give more, to have a proper dedicated few sessions about changes	<p><u>Valuable concept to support transition</u></p> <p>Incorporate into curriculum</p> <p>To support understanding of transition</p> <p>To elicit more positive views about transition</p> <p>Transition can be challenging</p>

Me	So because they have no control over the transition you mentioned before, and therefore making sure what they know about what might happen in the future and making sure that they are feeling positive about the future is important.	Challenge for students - Lacking agency affects views about transition
Eric	Yes, definitely, cause it's like at the moment, it's like the opposite, they kind of think they are heading to a brick wall so we have to ease transition, make it a little more okay or transparent so that they think they can drive through, if we can.	making transition explicit (supports transition) Hope to ease transition
Me	(To Faye) do you have anything to add?	
Faye	That's absolutely brilliant! Because we do have somebody that is leaving in a couple of weeks and in a particular class. A teacher and I were talking, ok we need to go and do some transition stuff with her. We've got to do that for the other children, and for her, and somehow build that in into our day to day discussion and how we can do that. Because there is going to be a big change for the children that she is with, but I think Eric makes an excellent point about it should be part of the sixth form, it will be really interesting, definitely, yea.	Challenge for students - Changes in social group (transition) Incorporate (hope theory) into 6 th form sessions
Me	So the project that I'm doing with the students is based on this Hope Theory. According to Snyder, the person who developed this theory, hope sparks when we have a goal that we want to achieve in life, is able to make plans for our goal, and is able to self-motivate. So, some researchers have been using this theory and developed hope programmes, aiming to promote hope in school. But this	

	<p>model that they developed is a very flexible model and it has not been used with students of special schools. So my research is to understand from the students' perspectives, and adults working with them.. teachers, parents, about how relevant and significant a programme like this is to the students, and how to apply it to students from this school. I have met with the students in four different sessions previously to discuss this. This table here tells you what we did in each session. In session 1, they explained these terms to me, Hope, Goals, Plans, and Motivation, and tell me a future goal they have achieved and how they achieved it. In session 2, they shared their experiences of how they achieved a goal in the past. In session 3, the students discussed the approaches that should be taken in a hope programme. In session 4, I asked them to list down the name of a close friend from this school but not in our research group, and imagine explaining these terms, hope, goal, etc.. to the friend, and tell me how they would help this friend to achieve his/her goal.</p>	
Eric	mmm.. Yes...	
Me	Yea... am I going too fast, is that alright?	
All	No, that's fine.	
Me	Ok. This table here shows you some of the students' definition of the terms. This table here shows you how the students think the programme should look like, to help them and students from this school to make plans, motivate themselves, achieve their goals,	

	and be more hopeful... and also how to better engage them in a hope programme. You can see some of the approaches here were quoted with students' responses, to give you a better idea of what they have said.	
All	Yes...	
Faye	This is all the students' ideas about putting it what could happen in future?	
Me	Yea, about what they think a hope programme should look like... So I will give you about a few minutes to read it and then we will have a discussion but please do not take this as an absolute guidance...	
Both	Yea (reading.....)	
Eric	Yea..I think this is a very good guideline and some good ideas as well. This could basically be a plan, on its own... erm.. absolutely.	Comprehensive approaches
Me	How relevant do you think it is to develop a hope programme using these approaches with your students?	
Eric	Children in Key Stage 4 and some Key Stage 5 who are more vocal, they are more able to have discussion, it lends itself out to those students. The students that we've got, coming up from KS3 are more SLD... but this can be adapted. Because you've got in here, images, drawings, pictures, videos so all those visuals, you know we need, we work with all of those, obviously, in everything that we do. Yea, absolutely, as long as it's interesting for them to start, and personal to them as well, it's great. I mean I love the idea of make them bringing in photographs and things that they have achieved in the past, and even things like if they have some	<p>Positive - Suitable for more vocal students</p> <p>Challenge – accessibility for SLD)</p> <p>Positive – Flexible for adaptation</p> <p>Positive - Good visual support</p> <p>Positive – Visual support meet the teaching methods</p> <p>Students' interest plays a role</p> <p>Important to be relevant to them</p> <p>Positive – sharing previous</p>

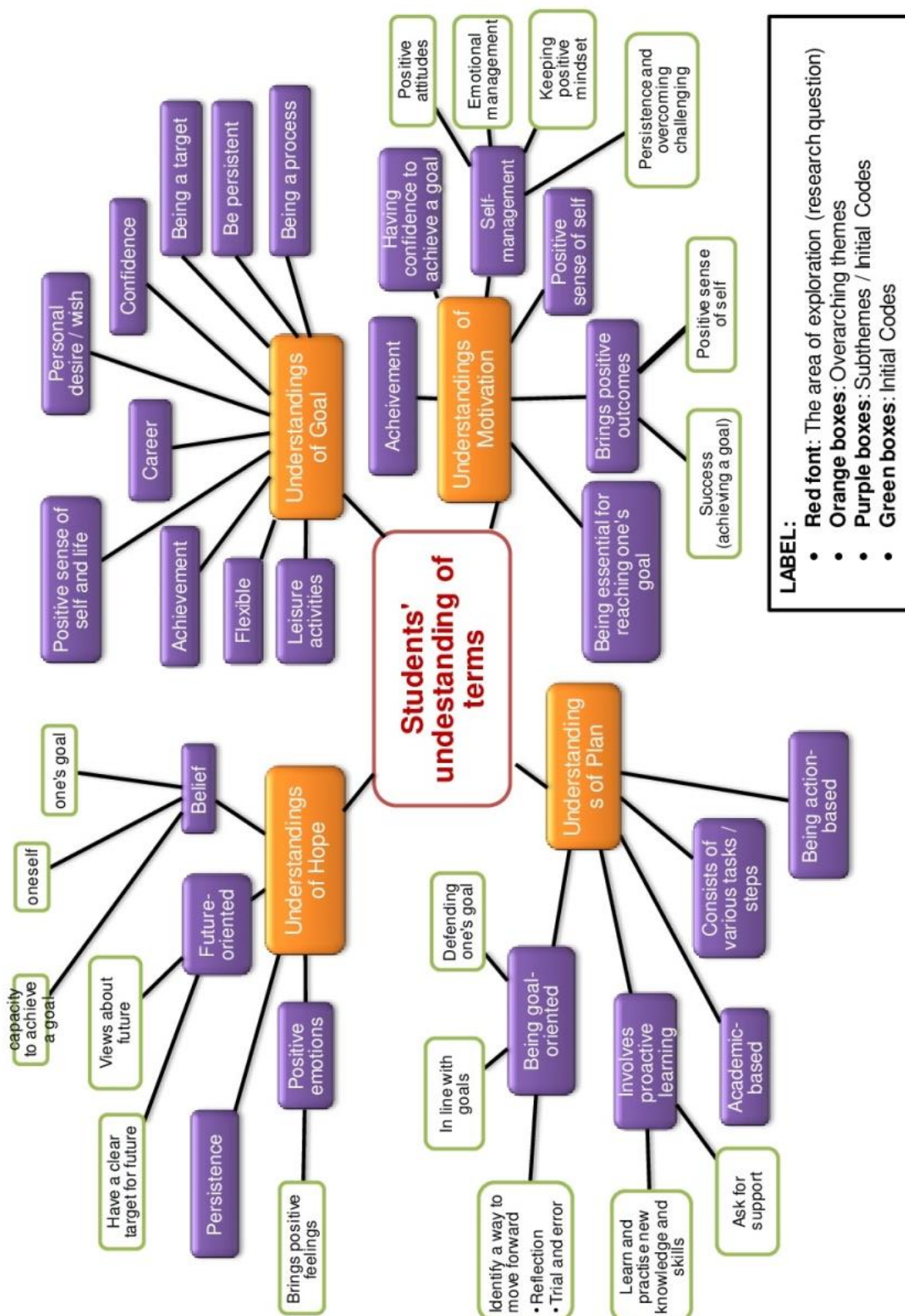
	<p>have them might have certificates, some of them will have.. whatever they've got, anything, trophies... so yea, person-centred, interesting, it's gotta be interesting to them and activities about this as well. So I think group talking, too much talking, could not necessary work with the SLD children, and the less able children, so more activities would work with these children (SLD). So it has to be tailored, has to be tailored but there are some great ideas.</p>	<p>achievement</p> <p>Challenge – accessibility for less able students</p> <p>Need more activities for SLD</p> <p>Needs adapting – for less able students</p>
Me	What do you think Faye?	
Faye	<p>Yea, I agree. I think the idea of... the 'setting' is important too. Because some of our students have issues with anger management, I mean that can spiral if you are feeling, your self-esteem is low and you are about to leave (the school). you are about to go to the big wide world, it will be good to have some tools, so that they can take with them, or to learn some of those, and in order to deal with some of those issues that might arise or when they are feeling.. very fast... how can you self-regulate, how can you come back to the centre of yourself, and focus, on your goal.</p>	<p>Positive - 'Setting' is important</p> <p>Challenge - emotional regulation difficulties</p> <p>Challenge - occupied by negative emotions</p> <p>Challenge - negative self-concept</p> <p>applicable to life out of school</p> <p>self-regulation difficulties</p>
Eric	<p>Tools, they can have.. give students a toolkit, like this is your toolkit, over the coming week, we are gonna put in there tools for you, it could be laminated words, it could be laminated words with a picture, or tools, and they can hand it over to someone who can help you, and they can choose, give them choice, wouldn't you?</p>	<p>Additional suggestion (self-calming toolkit)</p> <p>Empower them to apply self-regulation strategies</p>
Faye	That will be useful.	
Eric	Will that be useful?	
Me	That's a good idea.	

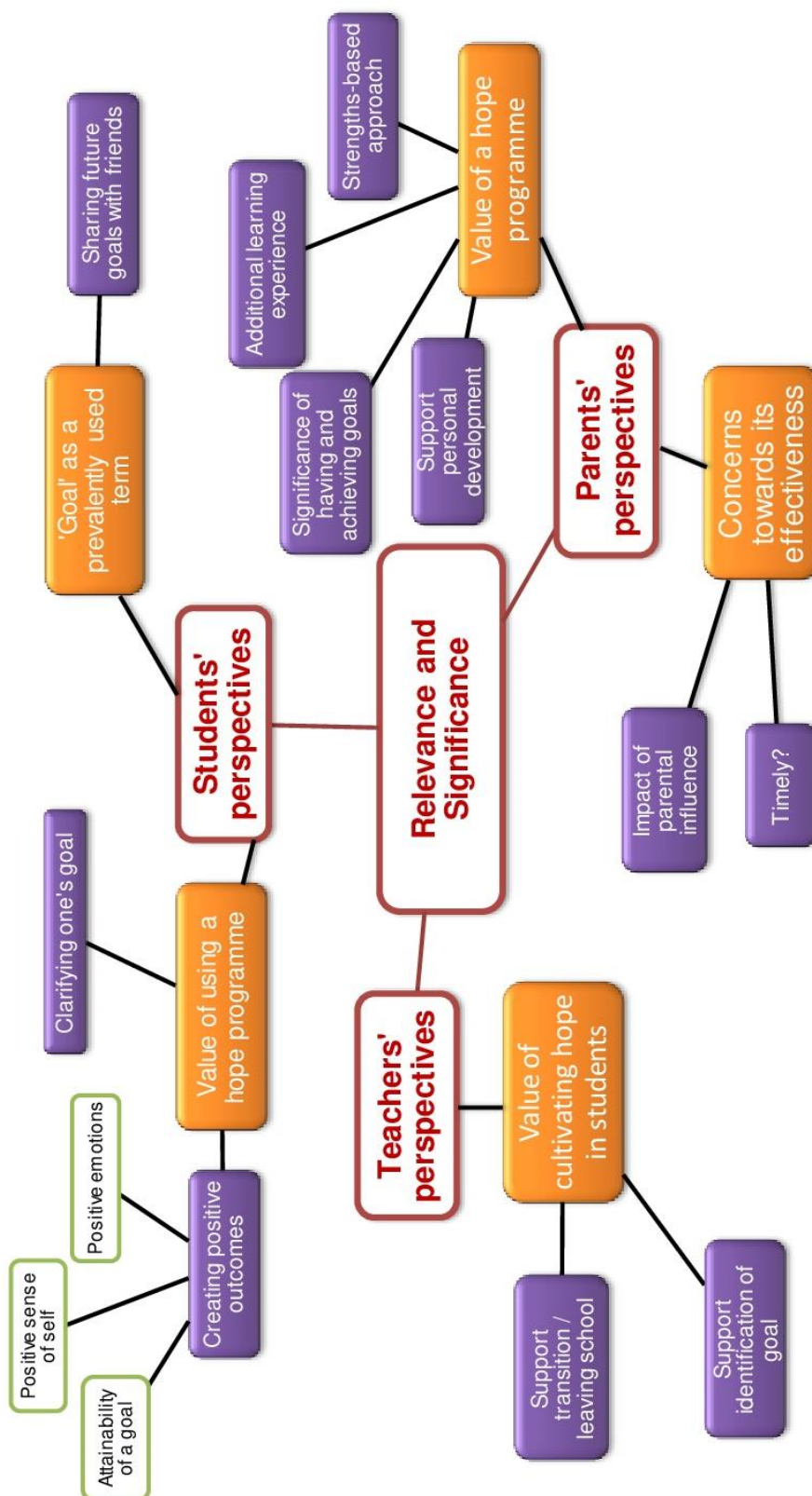
Faye	<p>Yea, things like reading, there are things like other pressure stuff that people could do, there, there are things like.. tools you know can be some breathing exercise, they could be done on a nice laminated card.. but there are some other tools like photographs, you know, and actually, they could actually accumulate and combine and everyone will have that bag of things that they need, if we are talking about in relation to future, transitioning and moving on, and into the big wide world (to keep them moving on) what could we give them to equip them to move on?</p>	<p>Additional suggestions – ‘self-calming tools’ of students’ choice</p> <p>Additional suggestions – Make the toolkit personal</p> <p>Applicable to life out of school</p>
Me	Yea, that’s a good idea to adapt the programme as well, to include all those stuff so that they could carry on, with either the programme or their future.	
Faye	<p>Yea, because you mentioned about the positive thinking, the problem is the spiral of ‘that’s gone wrong’ ‘I feel bad’, negative thinking and one of the pupils that we work with, can just spiral like that.</p>	<p>Challenge – occupied by negative thinking</p> <p>Challenge – Challenging to reinforce positive thinking</p>
Eric	Absolutely... couple, couple there..	
Faye	<p>Yea, couple... so how do we, we have to find a spot, when you are down there, you can just pick on it, you know, stop, breathe and try to hit back into the positive thinking... like just... I don’t know... just something that can be added to... it’s about accessing isn’t it?</p>	<p>Setting – Personal space (for self-regulation)</p> <p>Additional suggestion – add approaches to empower self-regulation</p>
Eric	Absolutely, it’s about accessing, it’s also about self-motivation	Self-regulation – complements self-motivation
Faye	You need to get self-motivated isn’t it, when you feel low	
Eric	Yea, absolutely.	
Faye	So when we have a kind of a thing, how can we..	

Eric	Give a choice	Additional suggestion – add approaches to empower self-regulation
Faye	Give them tools to find those confidence	
Eric	Yea, give a choice and say 'ok, you've got your toolkit, if you are finding some negative unhelpful thinking, ok, would you like to be given your tools to work with'?	Additional suggestion – approaches to empower self-motivation / regulation
Faye	They might not need it once they have left (school), they might just throw it over there, but one day, they might go and find their tool bag, when they are struggling, with outcomes that are not as expected.	Applicable to life out of school
Eric	I mean, yea, we could start the sessions by reviewing toolbox or toolbag and say alright, who would like to share what's in your toolbag? And say 'so why have you chosen that'? you know just get them to start talking.	Additional suggestion – toolbox can be an ice-breaker activity
Me	Yea, and then we could set up a kind of rapport building as well, and to help them understand each other better.	
Eric	Yea, some activities that could link them together.	
Faye	Yea, and I was about to say that being clear, is so important for the students in this school.	Clarity is important
Eric	Yea	Accessibility – students with low language skills Support - Use simple language
Faye	It's so important because some people are very literal but some are not, the language has to be very basic, clear, because otherwise you set up confusion. I'm just thinking of one of the students in the group as well	
Eric	I mean it takes up time as well, which is being clear and when they answer a question, you know, you really need to ask the question and then pause...and then give them an example and then pause... and then repeat the same	Students need more time – for understanding Support – Provide examples to reinforce understanding Support – Pausing and

	question.. to give them time to process the question.	repeating → Allow time for information processing
Me	Yea, I do agree with you, in the group as well sometimes they would ask to repeat the questions. Is there anything about the that has, maybe, surprised you?	
Eric	I don't... Nothing stands out particularly, it's just good to be reminded of the good practice, you know, all of these is good practice, there is nothing here that I think is wrong, everything is correct as far as I can see. What do you think, Faye?	Positive – appropriate approaches
Faye	No, not to me	
Eric	And I like the 'comforting' as well.. it's just letting them know 'it's normal'.. It can be frightening, it can make you feel upset, but those are normal feelings.	Support for emotional management – Normalising feelings
Me	Yea, they do mention that as well that it's very important to know it's alright to struggle. So do you think parents may have a role in the programme?	
Eric	Well, I think... If a programme of this kind were set up in a school, then I'm sure parents would appreciate knowing that it was taking place... and would be happy to feedback, especially if they feel it is helping their child.	Home-school collaboration – to evaluate students' progress
Me	Ok, so from your experience, is there anything that you think I should ask but haven't been brought up?	
Eric	No... not that I could think of	
Bell rang!		
Eric	We've gotta go. Is that alright Erin?	
Me	Yea, that's fine, that's very helpful.	

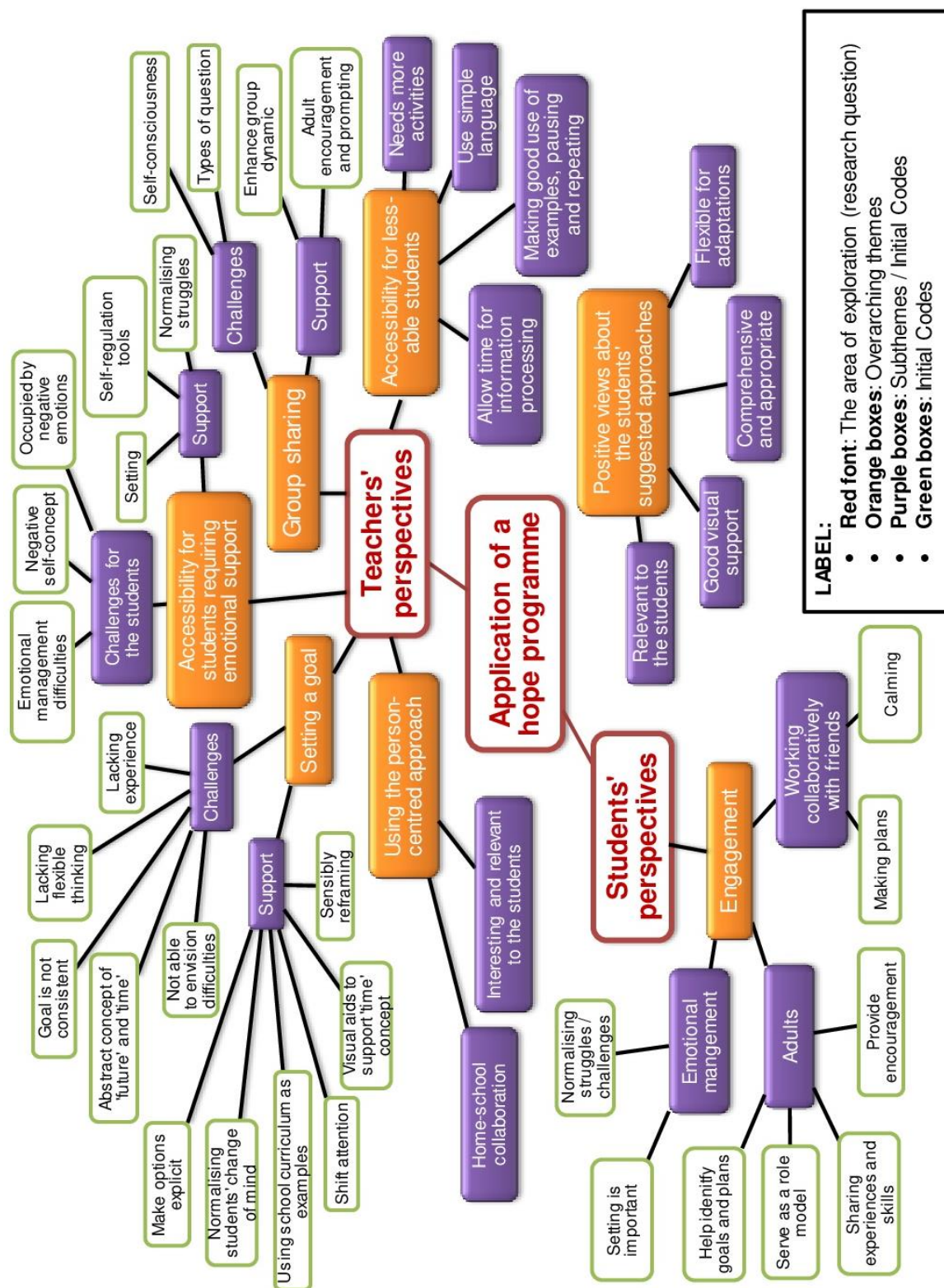
Appendix L: Conceptual maps for each research question





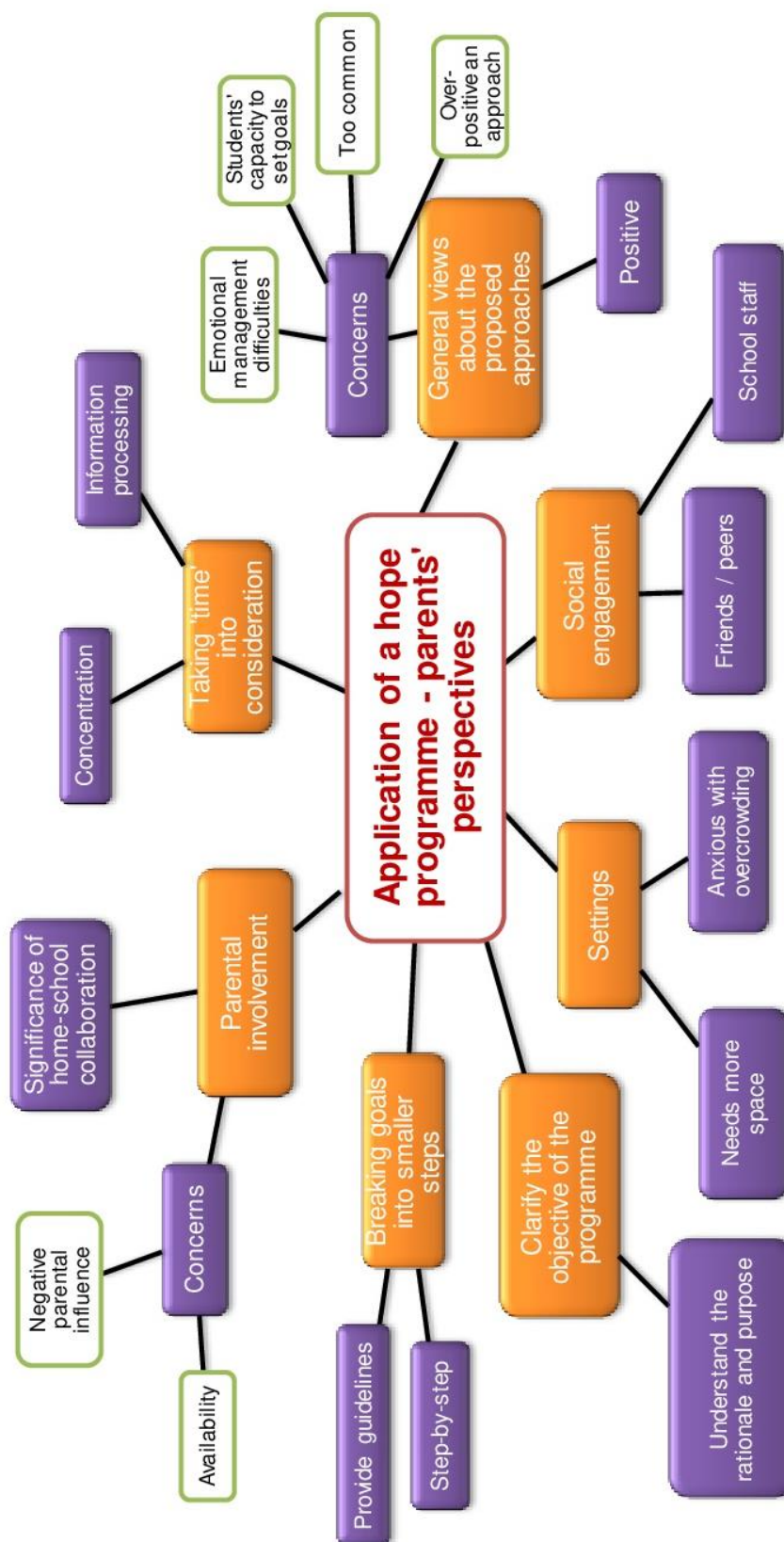
LABEL:

- **Red font:** The area of exploration (research question)
- **Orange boxes:** Overarching themes
- **Purple boxes:** Subthemes / Initial Codes
- **Green boxes:** Initial Codes



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